

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

AUGUST 1982

\$1.50

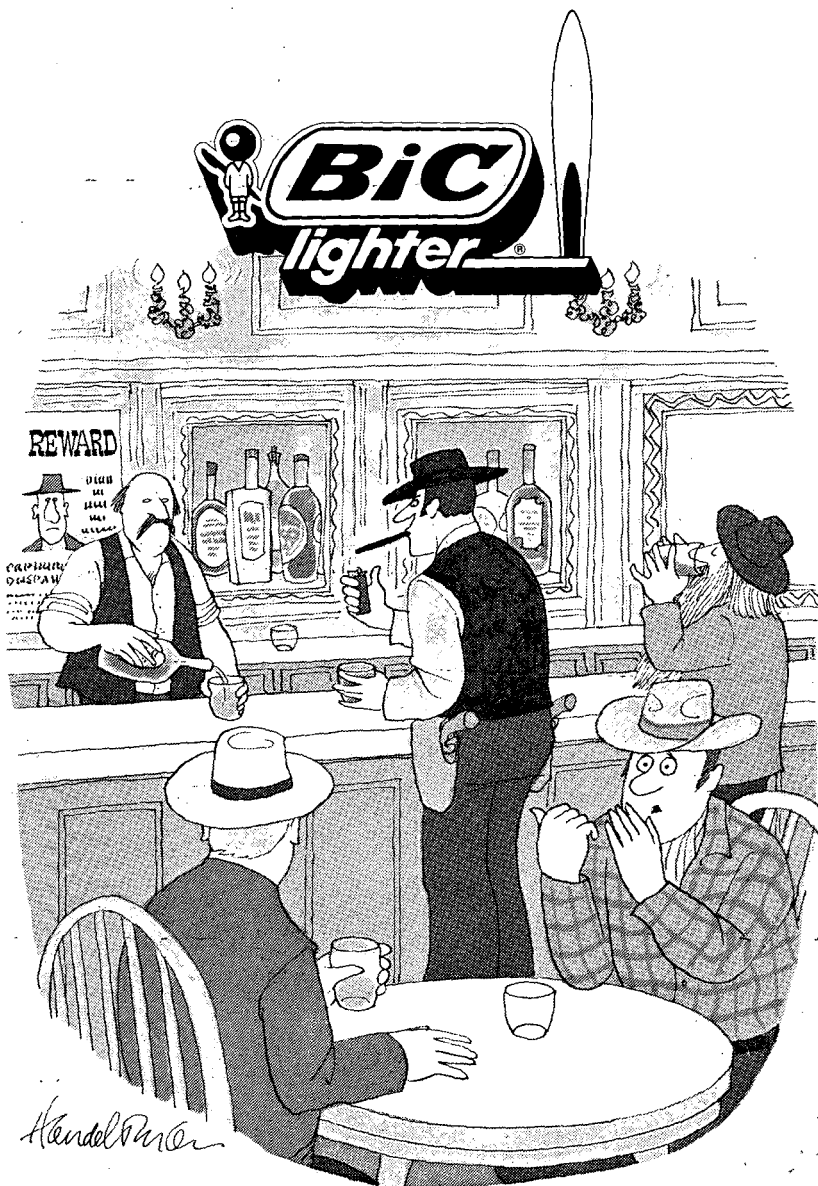
TELLERY QUEEN®

12 NEW STORIES

**Edward D. Hoch Margaret Yorke
Julian Symons James Powell
George Baxt**



0 25020
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"Folks say he's got the quickest flick in these parts."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN®

- 6 **The Dream Is Better** / Julian Symons
- 19 **A Decent Price for a Painting** / James Holding
- 29 **Nobody's Told You, Have They?** / Ian Stuart
- 37 **The Haunted Bookcase** / James Powell
- 50 **Too Good To Be True** / Donald Olson
- 61 **The Puzzle Cube** / Kate Seago
- 66 **Clap Hands, There Goes Charlie** / George Baxt
- 86 **Fair and Square** / Margaret Yorke
- 100 **Clean Sweep for Lou** / Louis Weinstein
- 112 **Where Are the Birds?** / Florence V. Mayberry
- 126 **Material Witness** / Isak Romun
- 136 **The Witch of Park Avenue** / Edward D. Hoch

- 77 **Mystery Newsletter** / R. E. Porter & Chris Steinbrunner
- 82 **The Jury Box** / Jon L. Breen

President & Publisher / Joel Davis

Editor-in-Chief / Ellery Queen

Editor / Eleanor Sullivan

Note: indicia on last page

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

QUEEN TO PUZZLE YOU. HITCHCOCK TO CHILL YOU.

ALFRED
HITCHCOCK'S

ELLERY QUEEN'S SECRETS
OF MYSTERY

Edited by
ELLERY QUEEN



ELLERY QUEEN'S

ELLERY QUEEN'S

ELLERY QUEEN

ELLERY QUEEN'S

CIRCUMSTANTIAL
EVIDENCE

ELLERY QUEEN



ALFRED
HITCHCOCK'S
THREE TO
TWO
STORY



ALFRED
HITCHCOCK'S

TITLES TO FILL YOU WITH
FEARS AND MYSTERIES

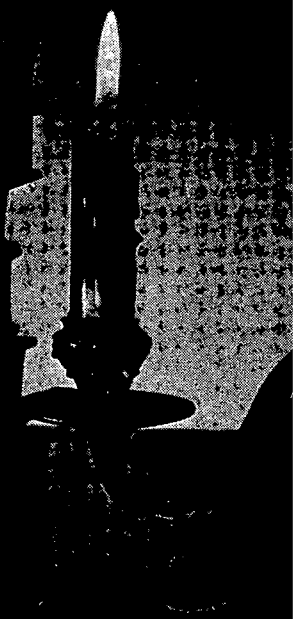


E
A

Ellery
Queen

by

Ellery
Queen



ANY 3 TO KEEP YOU UP ALL NIGHT. ONLY \$1 EACH.

They've always had a way of keeping you too engrossed to stop reading. Or too frightened to go to sleep.

Queen and Hitchcock have kept millions of readers awake until dawn for many years. Now, you can choose any three of their top ten mystery collections for only \$1 each (\$3 plus shipping) as your introduction to Ellery Queen's Mystery Club.

Each collection features short stories and novellas by some of the most famous masters of our time. Great detective writers like MacDonald, Simenon, Stout and Ellery Queen himself. Explorers of the strange and the macabre like Asimov, Robert Bloch and August Derleth.

In the months to follow, you can look forward to more high-calibre mysteries. As an Ellery Queen club member, you'll receive similar collections, every other month, at prices that are below publisher's list.

Recent selections have included WINTER'S CRIMES ELEVEN, a chillingly good show by some of Britain's best mystery writers. And GOOD AS GOLD, four superb stories featuring The Saint, Leslie Charteris' urbane adventurer with an insatiable appetite for luxury, women and danger.

Top-notch mysteries and low prices aren't the only advantages enjoyed by Ellery Queen club members; we don't ask you to buy any minimum number of books. We send you advance descriptions of each selection. If you don't want it, you can reject it ahead of time. Or send it back within 21 days if you're not satisfied. And you can cancel your membership any time with no further obligation.

Send no money now. Just check the three Ellery Queen and/or Alfred Hitchcock collections you'd like to receive. Fill in the coupon and mail it to Ellery Queen's Mystery Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

Yes, your offer sounds worth losing sleep over! Please enroll me as a member and rush me the three collections I've checked. I enclose no money now. After 10 days' examination, I will either keep the books and pay \$3 plus shipping, or I'll return them. As a member, I understand I will receive advance descriptions of future books, currently at \$7.39 plus shipping. I may, of course, return any book(s) within 21 days for full credit — and may cancel at any time.

Check three boxes only.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Ellery Queen's Veils of Mystery | ☐ Alfred Hitchcock's Tales to Send Chills Down Your Spine |
| ☐ Ellery Queen's Scenes of the Crime | ☐ Alfred Hitchcock's Tales to Fill You with Fear and Trembling |
| ☐ Ellery Queen's A Multitude of Sins | ☐ Alfred Hitchcock's Tales to Scare You Stiff |
| ☐ Ellery Queen's Secrets of Mystery | ☐ Alfred Hitchcock's Tales to Be Read with Caution |
| ☐ Ellery Queen's Circumstantial Evidence | |
| ☐ Ellery Queen's Wings of Mystery | |

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY CLUB, ROSLYN, N.Y. 11576

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ (please print clearly) 2-ZE

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ EO3RIG

Note: Members accepted in U.S. and Canada only. Offer slightly different in Canada.

a **NEW** short story by

JULIAN SYMONS

With Helen, Andrew was at peace. It was not his fault that such peace had been reached through travail and through blood.

In Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers (St. Martin's Press, 1980), contributor George Woodcock writes: "In the end, it is not for the way he solves the details of crimes that Symons' novels are interesting, but rather for the way he finds their causes in the minds of men and the shapes of societies."

And so it is with Julian Symons' short stories as well. . .

THE DREAM IS BETTER

by **JULIAN SYMONS**

1: ANDREW BLOOD'S MANUSCRIPT

I think of the misery of the past and the peace of the present. I think of the women who almost blasted my life, Jean and Olga, and then of Helen, who has brought me happiness.

In retrospect, the past seems to have been nothing but a series of defeats and humiliations. I know the need to put them down on paper. Helen is here today and sits on the other side of the room. I tell her of my intention and she approves with the serenity that is her nature. Jean and Olga were furious, frantic, and deceitful. I had thought that to be the nature of all women except my mother, but Helen has shown me otherwise. She brings to my mind Edgar Allan Poe's lines:

"Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore."

© 1982 by Julian Symons.

With Helen I am at peace. It is not my fault that such peace has been reached through travail and through blood. The last may be thought appropriate, since my name is Andrew John Blood.

My father was an inspector in the revenue service, what is sometimes called an income-tax collector, although of course he did not collect taxes in person but was responsible only for assessing the sums owing and sending out the necessary notices. The occupation is respectable but not popular, and boys at school would jeer at me because of it. The combination of my surname and my father's occupation led them to call me bloodsucker.

"Watch out, don't let him get near you, he'll suck your blood!" they would cry. "My dad says it's what his dad does for a living!" They would go on to make sucking noises, so that often I ran home in tears. My mother comforted me and said that they were only teasing.

It would have been useless to speak to my father. He had only two interests in life, his work and his stamp collection. He was especially concerned with Nineteenth Century stamps of Chile, Peru, and Ecuador, and engaged in long correspondence about them. Once, when I was making a drawing, I knocked over the India ink I was using and ruined several pages of stamps. He showed no outward anger but afterwards had as little to do with me as possible. I have affections—yes, indeed I have affections, and of the purest kind—but I could feel no emotion when he stepped absentmindedly off the pavement one day (his mind perhaps on some Peruvian stamp issue), was knocked over by a lorry and instantly killed. After the funeral my mother said that I must be the man of the house and look after her now. I was thirteen years old.

What can I say about Mother? Her photograph, in an old-fashioned silver frame, is on the table at which I write. Her head is a little to one side, and she has the wistful and apologetic expression that I remember so well. Looking at the photograph, I see that she was a pretty woman. I was always said to look like her and be a pretty child, but this never occurred to me at the time, I suppose because for years I was so close to her.

I was an only child and she fussed over me, making sure that I always had clean linen, cooking and washing up, keeping my bedroom tidy and making the bed. Even when I got my first job as an apprentice draughtsman in a big engineering firm (I had always been good at making neat accurate drawings), I never had to dry a

plate or a dish, and never hung up a jacket or put away a pair of shoes. My mother had said that I must look after her, but what she meant was that with my father gone she would have more time to look after me. We were constant companions and needed nobody else.

We lived in a small town in the southeast of England. Our house was about forty years old, with a bow window in front, a living room, dining room, and three bedrooms. It was a replica of the others in the road, for they had all been built at the same time. Here I lived for the first thirty years of my life.

Looking back on that time, which seems very long ago, I cannot say I was unhappy. I enjoyed my work in the drawing office of my firm. I bought a small car and used it to take Mother for a spin in the country and dinner at a little country inn, or to go with her to the town repertory theatre. She was fond of a good play.

Occasionally, late at night in my room, I wrote poems about girls, visionary girls who were an ideal for me as they were for Poe. In no way did they resemble the coarse creatures I met at the office, with their constant giggling and their vulgar jokes. Such girls were no worse than the men, but I expected that they would be better.

I was twenty-seven years of age when I met Jean.

My mother liked to go to the Conservative Party bazaar. This was held during the summer, in the grounds of Ampleton House, home of Lord and Lady Ampleton. The stalls were erected on the big central lawn, but there were tree-lined avenues on either side, down which one could walk, with little paths off them that led to cunningly created arbors and small waterfalls.

It was an enchanting place. Of course, Mother expected me to accompany her but, once arrived, she soon found people she knew and on this occasion immediately met Mrs. Wilson, the Party secretary. I knew that she was occupied for at least half an hour, so that I was free to wander. I walked down one of the avenues, and then stood still at the vision I saw at the other end of it.

The avenue sloped upwards and the girl I saw was at the top of the slope, so that she was outlined against the blue sky. Her figure was slim and elegant, her bright golden hair was shoulder length, and her distant profile—for she was turned away from me—looked exquisitely delicate. I made no approach to her, for at that moment all I wanted was to keep this perfection in my memory. But she began to move towards me and to my surprise smiled and waved a

hand. When we were a yard or two apart, she spoke to me by name and told me that she was Jean Merton.

She laughed, a low musical sound. "You won't know me but I've heard a lot about you. I'm Mrs. Wilson's niece."

When seen so close she lacked the perfection of beauty I had imagined from a distance, but there was a charm and eagerness about her that overwhelmed me. Her eyes danced with pleasure and she said outright how delighted she was to meet me.

"Aunt Wilson would bring me along, though I knew it would be an awful drag. But now it's different. Come and help me buy jam and honey—I said I'd take some back. And I've got to get a bit of something or other for my young sister, Nancy. She likes bright and gaudy bits of jewelry." She took my hand as though that was the most natural thing in the world, and it seemed natural to me also.

We bought half a dozen things at the fair, including a one-eyed elephant Jean said she must have because he looked so pathetic, and by the time we found Mrs. Wilson and my mother I knew I was in love. If you think that is ridiculous you fail to understand the spell that may be cast by beauty. I had learned various facts about Jean—that she had some sort of secretarial job, was four years younger than me, and so on—but they were unimportant. She was the most beautiful person I had ever seen, and I wanted to be with her always.

I said something of this to my mother when we returned home. She listened with a smile that changed to a frown. When I had done, she said, "Andrew, you are twenty-seven years old. How many girls have you taken out?"

"None. There was nobody I liked."

"Your father died before telling you things you should have known. And then, perhaps I have been selfish. I had hoped we would always be together until—" Her voice faltered. I told her that of course I would never leave her, but she continued.

"You are an unworldly boy, a dreamer. That has always been so, and I would not wish you different. From what I hear, I am not sure that Jean Merton is the right girl for you. Perhaps there is no right girl. You may find that girls are not like your dreams, that always the dream is better."

I hardly listened. I had already arranged to take Jean to a concert the following evening.

In the following days I took Jean to the concert, to a traveling art exhibition that had come to our Town Hall, and to the cinema—a

film with Woody Allen she wanted to see. After the film we went to dinner at the Venezia, which was said to be the best restaurant in town. I cannot remember what we ate and drank. There remains in my mind only the vision of her on the other side of the table, her laugh, her flickering fingers as she made a point about the film, her hair shining gold, whether in daylight at the art exhibition or in the subdued light of the Venezia.

Her family home was a little way outside town. She did not live there but in a small block of flats near the town center. When I took her back that night she invited me in, saying that she had a bottle of cognac. I said that I had drunk both a glass of sherry and some wine.

"Don't be so *stuffy*, Andrew. Come up anyway."

The apartment was small, a bed-sitting room, kitchenette and bath. She poured the brandy, then came and sat beside me.

"Andrew."

"Yes?"

"You like me, don't you? If you like me, kiss me." I put an arm round her and our lips met, hers pressed against mine.

"I shall begin to think you *don't* like me," she murmured, and the words seemed to break the bond that had kept me almost silent. I said that liking was not the word, that for me she was a thing of beauty, and that beautiful things should be worshipped. She ran a hand through my hair and said that I was a funny boy, she'd never met anybody like me.

I drove home that night in a daze. On the following night I asked Jean to marry me.

We had spent part of the evening in the lounge bar of the County Hotel. Jean liked sitting in pubs and bars, saying that they had a wonderful atmosphere. She was fond of a drink called a whisky sour, which looked pleasant but seemed to me to have a curious taste. I thought that she both drank and smoked too much.

That night she seemed nervous, lighting cigarettes and putting them out half-smoked. I asked what was the matter and she said that her work was boring—sometimes she felt she couldn't face it for another day.

At that I spoke. The words came out of their own volition. "Why not give it up?"

"What do you mean?"

"Give it up. Marry me."

I put down the pen now and visualize the scene clearly—a scene

utterly remote from this little room. The bar was dim, with purple-shaded wall lights. Canned music played softly. Jean's features were slightly blurred, in a way that enhanced her beauty. Her gaze looked beyond me, as though she saw our future together. She said nothing, and I was content to let the moment rest.

Then a man's voice spoke from behind my left ear. "Who's this?" it said.

"Jerry," Jean said. "Jerry Wilson, this is Andrew Blood. Andrew has just asked me to marry him." The man gave a kind of snort. "And I've said yes," she told him.

"Don't be bloody stupid." The man took his hands out of his pockets. They were large and covered with hair, like a monkey's. He used obscene words to her, words I shall not write down, and was gone.

I should have known the truth then, although I could not have imagined all of it. Jean said that the man was somebody she used to know and that he was really rather awful. She also said again that she would marry me.

"You are making a mistake," my mother said when I told her. "I don't say that only because I shall miss you. She is not Miss Right. I could tell you things I have heard—"

I refused to listen to them.

We went together to buy the engagement ring, a simple circle of diamonds. I met her father and mother. He was a farmer and evidently well-to-do. They were polite to me, but seemed to greet the news with some reserve, which was a matter of indifference to me.

I have never cared for other people or felt the need of friends, having always been content with life at home, but I told my colleagues in the drawing office. There were congratulations, mixed with the kind of jokes I dislike, although I endured them. The department manager called me in, congratulated me, said that they were pleased with my work and that my salary would be raised. He said also that he and the rest of them hoped to meet my future wife. I made some reply, I don't know what. I had no wish that Jean should meet any of them. My private life had nothing to do with my work.

The engagement was announced in the local paper. I saw Jean most evenings and she often came to lunch on Sunday. Mother was an excellent cook, took special pains with these lunches, and was polite to Jean, but I could see it was all on the surface.

Jean said more than once that Mother didn't like her.

"She doesn't want to lose her pretty baby boy. And she thinks I smoke too much—I can see her counting the number of cigarettes each time I light one." Of course I said that wasn't true, although I knew there was something in it. "And she expects to be paid compliments every time she cooks a meal. I can cook, you know. I'll make dinner for us tomorrow night."

And she did. Each of the courses was from a recipe originated by a great chef and had some complicated sauce or dressing. I really preferred mother's simpler cooking, but of course I said everything was wonderful. Afterwards we sat on the sofa. I kissed her, and within a few moments she made a suggestion to me which, again, I shall not write down, accompanying it with physical actions. I said as gently as possible that I did not care for or approve that kind of thing, certainly not until we were married.

She lay back and stared at me. I could see that she was angry, but anger made her more beautiful than ever. She said I had better go home, and I left her.

I heard nothing from her after that. I telephoned her office and was told that she was on a week's holiday. I rang the flat but there was no reply.

When the week had passed, she called and said that she would like to see me. The place was the lounge of the County Hotel, where I had proposed to her. When I arrived she was already there, a whisky sour in front of her. She pushed a little box across to me.

"One ring, returned," she said. "Engagement finished."

I stared at her unbelievably.

"It was a mistake. I should never have said yes. You want to know why I did? You'll hardly believe it in these days of the pill—or perhaps you've never heard of the pill, I'd forgotten what you're like—but Jerry had got me pregnant. He didn't want the kid and I did, or I thought so. So when you turned up I said yes. I was going to try to make you believe the kid was yours, but there wasn't much chance of that, was there? I don't think I could have gone through with it anyway, but it doesn't matter now. I had an abortion. Jerry and I are getting married."

I took the ring and looked at it wonderingly. I could feel tears forming in my eyes, tears not of self-pity but of regret at losing so much beauty. Jean finished her drink.

"It would never have done, and you must know that. I like the way you look, but you don't really need anyone but your mother."

That was the end of it. I told Mother that the engagement was

broken. She said that she was pleased for my sake and with her wonderful discretion never uttered another word about it. I sold the ring back for half what I paid for it. There were jokes at the office, but I ignored them and after a while they stopped. I have said already that I had no close friends.

Mother and I settled down to our old life together. She said sometimes that Miss Right would come along one day, although she hoped it would be after she had gone. Sometimes she added that this might not be long. I told her not to talk like that and paid no attention to what she said.

Then one day, nearly two years after the parting from Jean, I came home and found Mother dead. It seemed that she had a heart condition of which she had never told me. She had gone upstairs to lie down in the afternoon, as she often did, and had passed out of life without pain.

I was stunned. In the days and weeks that followed I realized how much I had depended upon her for everything. I knew I must change my life. I sold the house, got rid of the furniture and most of Mother's possessions, although I could not bring myself to dispose of some things, like her jewelry. That was a terrible time and I cannot write more about it.

The doctor was concerned for me and said that I should go away to recover from the shock. I did so, and found Helen. Again, I shall not write about this. When I returned I bought an apartment and lived there contentedly. Through Helen I have learned to cook, to wash and iron clothes, and through her the flat is kept in a way that would have made Mother proud. I never spoke of her to the people I worked with, feeling it was better so.

So passed weeks, and months. I have made what happened sound sudden but it was gradual. I recovered from the shocks of Jean's betrayal and Mother's death, like somebody slowly emerging from severe illness who becomes a little stronger each day. With Helen's help I recovered my serenity so that the past was wiped out as though it had never been.

And then Olga entered my life—Olga from central Europe, Olga Kreisky.

Olga's parents had been refugees who came to this country just before the war, and although she was born in England she spoke with a distinct foreign accent. She had some architectural training and came to the office as a draughtsman. She was a large woman,

large in a way that people call motherly, although my mother had been fine-boned and delicate, as I am.

Olga was, I suppose, about my own age, although because of her size she seemed to me older. I do not know why she should have taken an interest in me, but she did so from the beginning. She would sit at the same table with me in the canteen and would say that I did not eat enough, I should have ordered the batter pudding or the macaroni and cheese. I would reply that I was not hungry and in any case did not care for starchy foods.

"But you are so thin, And-rew"—almost from the start she called me Andrew, dwelling lovingly on the name. "You should put flesh on your bones. It is because you cook for yourself, that is not good. A man on his own never eats properly."

She told me she lived with her sister, who would be getting married soon. "Then I am on my own too, but never fear, I shall go on making my soups and puddings, and my schnitzels. You must come round, And-rew, and I cook for you my special wiener schnitzel. You will not feel hungry afterwards, I can tell you." She laughed heartily and her plump cheeks wobbled.

Mother taught me always to be polite and I hope I have not forgotten my manners. I said I had a poor digestion and must be very careful. She said she knew of many special health foods and she could prepare those too. I stopped using the canteen, but it did not free me from her. She would come over to my drawing board to see what I was working on and, leaning over so that I felt the pressure of her bosom, praise my skill and neatness.

She made sure that she left the office when I did, and at first I made the foolish mistake of giving her a lift in my car, with the result that I was invited indoors to meet her sister. She introduced me as "My dear friend And-rew" and her sister Nadia said she had heard much about me. How could she have done when there was nothing to hear? I stopped driving to work in the car.

Olga wanted to see my flat, saying she was sure it needed a woman's touch. I avoided giving her the address. I knew it would be disastrous for her to meet Helen. I had to endure a great deal of what I believe is called "ribbing" about Olga at the office. I said nothing, I showed my supreme indifference, both to the dolts surrounding me and to Olga, but Olga's skin was hippopotamus-thick. She began to bring pies and sandwiches to the office, insisting that we share them for lunch. I did not how to refuse without rudeness.

I nearly told her of Helen at home, who would prepare anything I wished, but refrained.

The strain on my nerves grew. I thought of changing my job, but feared that Olga might follow me elsewhere. Her round fat face, her huge udders, the whole bulk of her began to obsess me. I had nightmares in which the weight of her flesh bore me down, so that I wriggled unavailingly beneath her. Yet I could not have imagined the nightmare that happened.

I had returned from work at the usual time, looking forward to my evening at home with Helen. A steak and salad, cheese and coffee, then an hour or two in front of the television. When the bell rang, Helen answered it. That was a mistake, for outside stood Olga, her arms full of brown paper parcels. It was dark in the hall, so that at first she did not see she was speaking to Helen.

"And-rew, I have been a naughty girl. You will not tell me your address, it is not in the phonebook, but I get it from the accounts department. But you forgive me, And-rew, when you see what I have here for us to eat. There is smoked salmon and then a special Hungarian sausage with noodles—"

At that moment she realized she was talking to Helen. And she began to laugh.

Her laughter roused me to fury. If she had not laughed I might have told her just to go away. But she laughed, this fat European cow laughed at my Helen. I pulled her inside the door and then towards the kitchen. She dropped the groceries. Then we were in the kitchen. I took the knife with which I had been trimming the steak and plunged it into the fat creature who had insulted Helen.

I cannot say what else I did with the knife. I was sane before the action, I am perfectly sane now, but I admit that for those moments I was mad. Mad, but greatly provoked. I do not excuse my action, yet surely all must agree that I was greatly provoked. When it was over, and the screaming had stopped, I looked at the thing on the floor and saw blood, blood everywhere. I felt that this was something ordained, that I had fulfilled my name. There had been eggs among the groceries and they had broken, so that in one place the yellow egg yolks were mixed with the red blood. When the police came I was trying to clear up the mess on the kitchen floor.

Such are the events that brought me to this room. I have set them down at Dr. Glasser's suggestion, and should like to add that I am happy to have retired from the world and grateful for the opportunity to live here and to receive visits from Helen.

2: THE IRONIES OF DR. GLASSER

Dr. Glasser's office was large and square. The walls were white and covered with framed certificates testifying to the doctor's psychiatric eminence. In person the doctor was tall, with an aquiline nose and a fine head of grey hair. There was something ironical in his gaze and in his manner, as though he found the world even more absurd than he had expected.

His visitor—small, tubby, with innocent eyes behind gold-rimmed spectacles—was named Johnson. He was a vice-president of the Mental Patients' Reform League. He put down the sheets of paper, which were written in a neat and elegant hand.

"Most interesting. And remarkably coherent, it seems to me."

"Yes, Andrew is perfectly coherent. It is a classic case, textbook material." Dr. Glasser steepled his fingers and looked up at the ceiling, as though he were lecturing. "The child is ignored by the father, attachment to the mother becomes total. Every woman met is seen not as a real person but in terms of the mother. Because of the incest taboo the sex act cannot be contemplated with any woman, they must all be remade in the mother's image. The experience with Jean was unfortunate, but it would have been much the same with any woman who desired sexual relations. For the reasons I have given, the sex act fills Andrew with horror."

Mr. Johnson moved uneasily. "I understand. But my point is—"

Dr. Glasser in flow was not easily checked. "He rejects it with violence. The injuries inflicted on poor Olga Kreisky were savage, far more than is indicated in the manuscript. There were mutilations."

"Very distressing. But all this was several years ago."

"Six years."

"As you know, the League's concern is that far too many patients are kept in homes, when they would be perfectly capable of leading normal lives: I understand Andrew still makes technical drawings."

"He does indeed. Very good ones."

"So that he is obviously capable of work. From his record, his behavior here has been exemplary. If he were let out on condition that he lives with this Helen, who I suppose might be called a mother-substitute, and to whom he is evidently devoted, would he be a danger to the community? But first, would you agree that Helen is a mother-substitute?"

The doctor turned his ironical gaze on Mr. Johnson. "I would."

"And would he be a danger to other people?"

"Perhaps not."

Mr. Johnson took off his glasses, polished them, and said earnestly, "Only perhaps? You agreed that his behavior has been exemplary."

"I did."

"Then why should he not be released?"

"Suppose somebody else insulted Helen?"

Mr. Johnson was taken aback. "Why should that happen? Helen has been remarkably faithful to him—she is clearly devoted. I understand from the document that she pays visits. Perhaps they might marry."

Dr. Glasser sighed. "Come along, Mr. Johnson. We will speak to this exemplary patient."

They left the room, took a lift, walked down a corridor, then down another at right angles to it. On either side were doors with names on them. The doors had keyholes but lacked handles. In a room between the corridors four male nurses sat playing cards. Little Mr. Johnson was uneasily conscious that they were all big men. The doctor spoke to one of them, who accompanied them. He opened one of the doors with a key from a bunch at his waist and said, "Andrew, here's Dr. Glasser to see you."

They entered a small sitting room, simply furnished. Several drawings were pinned up on the walls, some of machinery, one of Dr. Glasser, and two of a woman Mr. Johnson supposed to be Helen. A man who sat reading in an armchair put down his book. He was small and had neat, almost doll-like features. "Good afternoon, Doctor."

"Andrew, this is Mr. Johnson from the Mental Patients' Reform League. He enjoyed your manuscript."

"Did you really? I'm so pleased." A smile touched the neat features. "It's all true, you know, every word. I was provoked, but I did very wrong. Just for the moment I went mad, although I am perfectly sane now, have been for years. Look at what I'm reading." He held up the book. "*Persuasion*, Jane Austen. I like to read about the past, it's so much more civilized than the present."

Mr. Johnson asked in his earnest way, "Supposing you were released, would you like that?" Andrew Blood considered, then nodded. "You would take a job, use your technical skills?" Another nod. "And live with Helen? Perhaps get married?"

A look of uncertainty, even alarm, touched the neat features. Andrew Blood looked questioningly at the doctor, who said softly,

"If Helen is here, Andrew, we'd be delighted to meet her."

The uncertain look was replaced by a charming smile. Andrew jumped up and went to an inner room. The nurse began to say something, but was checked by Dr. Glasser. It was perhaps no more than two or three minutes, although it seemed longer to Mr. Johnson, before the figure appeared in the doorway.

It was small and wore a wig of grey hair, permanently waved. The face below it was that of Andrew Blood; but it had been powdered to a dead whiteness and lipstick crudely applied so that it looked like a clown's face. The figure wore an oatmeal-colored twin set with a rope of imitation pearls round the neck and high-heeled shoes. It came mincingly across the room, held out a ringed hand, and said in a falsetto voice, "How do you do?"

The figure was ludicrous in itself, but it was the words and the falsetto voice that broke Mr. Johnson's composure. He was unable to refrain from laughter. The sounds were loud in the little room, and although he put a hand over his mouth laughter continued to bubble up.

That was one moment. In the next he was on the floor, hands were tearing at his face and throat, a high voice was screaming abuse. His face had been badly scratched and his spectacles knocked off, although not broken, before the doctor and nurse managed to pull the figure off him.

Back in the office Dr. Glasser poured a tot of whisky and apologized. "Forgive me for practising that little deceit. I should have told you that Andrew was Helen, but I thought visual evidence would be more convincing. Of course, I could not know that you would laugh. That was an insult to Helen, and Andrew was outraged by it, as he was when Olga Kreisky laughed."

"And Helen is—"

"Hardly Poe's Helen, as you will have gathered from her appearance. Helen was the name of Andrew's mother. She was the center of his life, and when she died he recreated her. Those were some of her old clothes. Andrew said in the manuscript that he could not bring himself to dispose of them. He is a small, neat man, and they fit him reasonably well.

"I told you it was a classic case and so it is, not of transvestism but of personality transfer. It occurs only among those who cannot face the physical aspects of life. Mrs. Blood understood that when she told him there might be no right girl for him, that he would always be one of those for whom the dream is better."

a **NEW** short story by

JAMES HOLDING

The painting depicted a beautifully designed huddle of brown-paper grocery bags done in pop-art style. The signature at the lower right corner of the 36x40" canvas was that of Carlton Sampson. What needed to be established was whether it was a genuine Sampson or a forgery. . .

A DECENT PRICE FOR A PAINTING

by **JAMES HOLDING**

It was a Thursday. The staff of The Art Institute was holding its weekly appraisal session to which the public could bring art objects for a free opinion from experts as to their authenticity and potential value.

Jeffrey Carmody was, as usual, on the paintings station. About the middle of the morning, he looked up to see a tall, bearded, shabbily dressed man standing before his counter with an unwrapped canvas under one arm. Carmody felt a premonitory glow of satisfaction which rarely crowned his efforts, for he could already see that the painting depicted a beautifully designed huddle of brown-paper grocery bags done in pop-art style by a skillful hand.

"Yes?" he said encouragingly.

The young man swallowed dryly and with the reluctant air of a person doing an unpleasant duty said, "This painting is signed Carlton Sampson. He's a pop-art painter. My sister wants me to ask you how much it's worth." He ran a nervous finger around the neck of his turtleneck shirt and put the painting on the counter before Carmody.

© 1982 by James Holding.

Carmody felt sweat on his upper lip as he regarded the signature at the lower right corner of the canvas. "Carlton Sampson, yes," he said softly. "He's one of the popular modern artists. Let's have a look." He examined the unframed 36 × 40" painting with a keen and knowledgeable eye. "It looks quite authentic. Where did you acquire it?"

"My brother-in-law got it in payment of a bet he made on the Super Bowl game last year. Is it any good?"

Without lifting his eyes from the painting, Carmody asked, "If it belongs to your brother-in-law, how do you happen to bring it in for appraisal?"

"My sister divorced him last month—he gave her this painting as part of the divorce settlement. And she needs money more than she needs a picture."

"I see," said Carmody. "And you want to know how much it's worth."

"Right."

"That depends on whether it's a genuine Sampson or a forgery. A genuine Sampson should bring you anywhere from six to fifteen thousand dollars in the present market. If it's a forgery, you'd be lucky to get a hundred from somebody who admires Sampson's work and can't afford an original."

"Gotcha," said the young man. "So which is it? Genuine or fake?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you offhand," Carmody said. "Could you leave it with me for a few days? I'd like to get the opinion of my colleagues and show it to Professor Hathaway before giving you a definite answer."

"Who's Professor Hathaway?"

"Head of the Fine Arts Department at the University—probably the greatest authority on artists, art history, and art forgery in the country."

"Oh." The young man was impressed. "Sure, I can leave it."

"Good. Come back next Thursday. I think it's a genuine Sampson, but I'm not an expert on pop-art." There was the faint trace of a sneer in his voice.

"O.K. I'll tell my sister. And I'll be back next Thursday."

Carmody wrote out a receipt.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Francis," the young man replied. "George Francis." Carmody wrote it down and signed the receipt. "My sister needs the dough bad," said Francis. "I hope it's the real thing . . ."

The following Thursday, George Francis was first in line at the painting station. He took his receipt out of a battered wallet, handed it to Jeffrey Carmody, and said, "George Francis—remember me? You were going to find out how much my sister's Carlton Sampson painting is worth."

Carmody looked up at him. "Of course I remember you, Mr. Francis. And your painting." He reached under the counter. "Here it is."

Francis tried to seem matter-of-fact but couldn't hide his eagerness. "Is it genuine? Can my sister sell it for the ten or fifteen grand you said?"

Carmody made a mouth of regret. "I'm truly sorry, Mr. Francis, but I'm afraid your sister's painting is a forgery. A very good forgery my colleagues are agreed, but a forgery nonetheless."

"You're telling me it's a fake?"

Carmody nodded sympathetically. "There's no question about it. Professor Hathaway went over it very carefully and concluded it's not a genuine Carlton Sampson."

Francis said bitterly, "Has he got X-ray eyes or something? How can he tell it's a fake?"

"There are a number of small indications," said Carmody, "many of which you, as a layman, might not understand."

"Try me."

"Well, look at the background, for instance." Carmody handed Francis a small magnifying glass. "The background is scumbled in with an inch-wide brush. Can you see the strokes? Carlton Sampson invariably uses a *half*-inch-wide brush for scumbling. And he uses shorter strokes than these. Also, Sampson's shadows always have a faint bluish cast and these shadows have no hint of blue in them. And Sampson stretches his own canvases, using tiny carpet tacks to secure the canvas to the stretchers, not staples like these. That, of course, is a purely mechanical peculiarity and, alone, would mean nothing. Combined with the other indications of forgery, however, it becomes significant. I'm sorry, Mr. Francis. Your sister's painting is definitely a forgery." He paused. Then, seeing the disappointment on Francis's face, he went on, "Don't take it so hard. Every year thousands of people bring us works for appraisal—things they've found in their attics or discovered in old trunks or whatever—and very few of them turn out to be valuable. Very few."

"My sister needs the money so bad," Francis muttered, "we were kind of hoping for a miracle—"

"In a way you've got one," said Carmody, smiling.

"How do you mean?"

"Professor Hathaway at the University liked the painting very much. He thinks it's a fake good enough to use in his lectures and he's willing to pay you two hundred dollars for it—if your sister would sell it for that."

Francis stared at him in astonishment. "You mean this guy Hathaway uses *fake* paintings to teach his students with?"

"Forgeries are frequently more revealing of style, coloration, and technique than originals," Carmody said. "Professor Hathaway has a closet full of fakes at his lecture hall. He has a phony Botticelli hanging in his office he claims shows more about how Botticelli worked than one of the master's own paintings."

Going to the heart of the matter, Francis said, "Two hundred bucks? Could he make it two-fifty?"

Carmody shook his head. "Two hundred's the limit. It comes out of the University's Fine Arts budget, which doesn't give him much leeway."

"All right, I'll take the two hundred," Francis said. "And thanks for your help. Where do I find Professor Hathaway?"

"His office is in Larabee Hall on the city campus. Do you know where that is?"

"Sure." Francis reached for the painting.

"Don't you want to check with your sister first? If it's her picture, maybe she'd like to—"

"She'll snap at the two hundred bucks," Francis said with a tight smile. "She wasn't expecting a thin dime."

Professor Hathaway's office was a 20 × 20' cubicle off a large sky-lighted classroom on the second floor of Larabee Hall.

Students, male and female, were pouring from the classroom door as Francis, with the canvas under his arm, arrived. He stood inconspicuously to one side until the last student had departed, then stuck his head inside the classroom door. Professor Hathaway was standing in the doorway to his office at the rear of the classroom, lighting a thin black cigar. He was below middle height but his hands and feet would have been suitable for a six-footer. His greying hair was short and parted on the side, his face as smooth and unlined as a baby's. He looked up as Francis entered the classroom door.

"Are you Professor Hathaway?" Francis asked.

"Yes, I am. And you are—?" Hathaway caught sight of the picture

under Francis's arm and smiled. "Ah, yes. The man with the fake Sampson painting. Jeff Carmody sent you here?"

"Yes," answered Francis. "He told me—"

"That although the painting is a forgery I'd give you two hundred dollars for it."

Francis nodded.

Puffing cigar smoke, Hathaway invited Francis into his office. "Put it on my easel there," he said, "and have a seat. I'll write you a check."

Hathaway dropped into a padded leather chair behind an exquisite French *escritoire*. The Botticelli forgery Carmody had mentioned hung on the wall above his head. Francis took a straight chair across the desk. "I was hoping it would bring a lot more than two hundred bucks."

Hathaway looked at him. "I have to stay within my budget, Mr. Francis. And two hundred is generous for a pop-art forgery."

Francis made a final protest. "Mr. Carmody said you thought it was a *good* forgery."

"Oh, it is, it is—an unusually convincing fake. Done by a talented painter who could no doubt make an honest name for himself if he wanted to." Hathaway took a checkbook out of a drawer of the *escritoire*. "Unfortunately, a great many talented artists down the centuries have preferred to imitate the works of other artists rather than create their own."

"Why?" asked Francis. "If they're such great painters?"

"Money. If a painter could forge an acceptable Rembrandt and sell it to some wealthy private collector as one of the master's originals, he stood to make much more money than he could get for an original painting of his own."

"I see. And that's what experts like you are supposed to prevent, right?"

"Indeed. And we do the best we can. But there's often a very fine line of difference between the genuine and the forgery and despite all the chemical and radioactive tests, the microscopic examination of brush strokes, forgeries are still very difficult to detect." Hathaway paused and smiled at Francis. "But you're really not interested in all this, are you, Mr. Francis?"

"Sure, I am," said Francis with a grin. "I'd be especially interested to know where I could find one of those wealthy private collectors to take this painting off my hands for fifteen grand."

Hathaway laughed aloud, a merry burst of sound. "If I knew one,

I'd be sorely tempted to sell him a few fakes of my own." He got up, opened the door to a roomy closet behind his desk, and switched on an overhead light to illumine the interior. A score or more of canvases of all sizes were stacked against the walls. "See those?" said Hathaway. "They're all forgeries—and damned good ones, like your Sampson there. If I could sell them as originals, I'd be a very rich man."

"That's a funny-looking guy," Francis said, pointing to a painting. Hathaway held the painting up to the light. "This one?"

"Yeah. The guy looks sick."

"This is supposed to be a portrait by El Greco, the Spanish painter. All El Greco's people look slightly sick, Mr. Francis—too tall, too emaciated, their heads too small for their bodies. In this picture, the wonderfully individual technique of El Greco is perfectly exhibited."

"But it's a fake all the same?"

"Definitely."

"How can you tell?"

"The forger, whoever he was, used a zinc white pigment that wasn't developed until the 1830s."

"So?"

"El Greco died in 1641."

"Oh." Francis backed away from the closet and Professor Hathaway returned to his desk. "Shall I make the check out to you or your sister?"

"To me, if you don't mind."

"What's your full name?"

"Carlton Sampson," said Francis very quietly. "Don't you remember me?"

Hathaway went ashen. "What!"

"I was a student of yours fifteen years ago, Professor. You thought I showed promise."

"But—" Hathaway's eyes went to the painting on the easel—"you *can't* be Carlton Sampson!"

"Oh, yes, I can. And that picture on your easel is *not* a forgery. It's an original Carlton Sampson, painted by my own lily-white hand three weeks ago in my own inimitable style. And positively identified by you, Professor, as a forgery done by some other artist. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" He eyed Hathaway ironically. "And you the greatest authority on art forgery in the country."

Hathaway rallied. "I still say it's a forgery. And that you are not Carlton Sampson."

"Here's my driver's license." Sampson pushed it across the desk. "You want me to do a demonstration painting for you?"

"So I made a mistake," said the Professor. "I'm sorry. I'm only human." He paused. "I told Jeff Carmody my reasons for judging your picture a forgery."

"You told him a bunch of lies. All that nonsense about scumbling brushes, blue shadows, and shorter strokes. You knew better than that. Because *you* taught me to paint like that. And besides, you had, for comparison, the painting I donated to the University's permanent collection at the opening of the new museum six years ago."

Hathaway said, "You can't think I *deiberately* pronounced your painting a forgery. Why would I do that?"

Sampson grinned at him. "You just told me why," he said. "So you can sell it to some private collector at full market price and make a bundle of dough on it."

When Hathaway opened his mouth to protest, Sampson cut him off. "Why deny it? I'll tell you how you work your little game—you and Carmody. You're in cahoots with him, aren't you?"

"No."

"Yes. And every once in a while a member of the poor dumb innocent public shows Carmody some painting he thinks might be an original by an artist whose work commands big prices—"

It was Hathaway's turn to interrupt. "Like yours?" he asked sardonically.

Sampson smiled at him through his beard. "I'm peanuts," he said. "But even fifteen grand isn't a bad profit on a two-hundred-dollar investment, is it? So Carmody shunts a possible original to you and if you decide it's an original worth a lot of money you tell its owner, through Carmody, it's a fake. Then you offer to buy it for the University as a study-piece for a fraction of what it's worth. And the poor owner, ignorant about art, usually takes your offer."

"You couldn't be further from the truth! The study-pieces in my closet are forgeries!"

"Sure, most of them probably are. Although that El Greco looked pretty damned original to me."

"I gave you the specific scientific evidence on which I based my opinion that it is a forgery," Hathaway said.

"Then how about letting me get another opinion on it—from Parke-Bernet, the Metropolitan, or the Cleveland Museum?" Sampson suggested.

"If you admit that my study-pieces are forgeries," Hathaway said

angrily, "I fail to understand your wild allegations about my selling them as originals."

"They're copies of the originals you and Carmody cheated the public out of—copies you painted yourself, Professor. First you copied the originals, then you sold them off for big bucks—probably through a crooked dealer—to private collectors. Then you stuck your copies in the closet there to replace the supposedly forged study-pieces."

Hathaway ground out his cigar stub in an ashtray and gave Sampson a pitying look. "I have encountered some fascinating art scams in my day," he said, "but the one you're accusing me of caps them all. Now listen to me, Sampson—if that's who you are. What can you possibly prove? Merely that I made a very human error in pronouncing your painting a forgery. I have already apologized for that. So will you please take your grubby little painting and get the hell out of my office?"

Sampson said, "Don't be hasty, Professor. Aren't you interested in the strange event which made me suspicious of you in the first place? It didn't just come to me in a vision, you know."

"I couldn't be less interested."

"I'll tell you anyway. Six weeks ago I was visiting a friend in San Francisco. At a party one night he introduced me to a local tycoon who owns a rather good collection of pop-art, including, he told me, one of my paintings. Man by the name of Santine. Ring any bells?"

"Not one."

"Well, I naturally asked Santine which one of my paintings he owned—to which he replied, 'The one called *Coppertubing II*.' Surprise! I've only painted *one* picture of coppertubing in my life and that's the picture I donated to the University six years ago. Don't you find that a remarkable coincidence, Professor?"

Hathaway's eyes narrowed slightly.

"I thought it was," said Sampson, "so I asked Mr. Santine if I could see my painting again. He invited me to his home and showed me the painting. And it *was* mine, Professor. I asked myself, would my old alma mater *sell* the picture I donated to its museum? No, I decided, it wouldn't. And the inevitable conclusion I reached was—What would you guess, Professor?"

In a choked whisper Hathaway replied, "I have no idea."

"I figured that if Santine's *Coppertubing II* was my original work, then the Sampson painting hanging in the museum here had to be a fake, painted by some villain in order to garner a few illicit bucks from my original."

"Now wait a minute!" Sampson began.

"I've waited long enough. When I returned from San Francisco, I inspected the painting in the museum. It's definitely a forgery—a good copy, but a copy all the same. That led me straight to you, Professor—the revered maestro of my student days, the famous art critic, teacher, and historian. And a very talented artist with a special flair as a copyist. How'm I doing, Professor?"

Hathaway was silent. He sat very still, his unlined face very white.

Sampson went on relentlessly, "If you're wondering why I worked through Carmody, I remembered your saying that you obtained your forged study-pieces through the kind offices of your friend and colleague at the Art Institute, Jeffrey Carmody."

Hathaway found his voice. "Suppose I *am* tempted occasionally to—manipulate a few paintings? What do you intend to do about it? Do you want to blast my career? Do you want to ruin a reputation it has taken me half a century to establish? Do you want to destroy me, Mr. Sampson?"

"Hell, no," said Sampson with a shrug. "All I want is a piece of the action."

The Professor goggled at him.

Sampson went on, "I'll never be more than a mediocre painter. But I *am* one hell of a copyist. I'm twice as good as you were in your palmiest days. And I'm tired of slaving to turn out trash that sells at fifteen grand, tops. So what I want from you, Professor, is fifteen percent of the big money you're making on the sale of original Pollocks, Van Goghs, O'Keeffes, Remingtons, Rembrandts, or whatever you pick up from the public through Carmody. And we can expand your business by selling some of my better copies as originals instead of the other way around. With you to authenticate them and dream up reasonable provenances for them, who's going to question them? Do you understand what I'm saying, Professor? I want to be an artist, yes, but I want to have a numbered Swiss bank account too—like yours."

"How did you find out about *that*?"

Sampson waved a deprecatory hand. "An educated guess. So what do you say?"

Hathaway hesitated only a fraction of a second. "I repeat what I said about you years ago—Carlton Sampson is one of my most talented students. Fifteen percent sounds satisfactory to me. When do you want to start?"

"Right now. Give me that El Greco original in the closet and I'll paint you a copy of it that even you couldn't swear was a fake."

"Excellent," said Hathaway, his cherubic face creasing in a smile, "I'm not up to a really convincing El Greco myself any more, I'm afraid."

"But I am." Sampson grinned happily. "Zinc white pigment and all. How much do you figure we can get for the original?"

"Anywhere up to a million."

"Now that," said Carlton Sampson, "is what I consider a decent price for a painting."

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

AUTOMATION

by *LAREN DART*

For years his wife had been wanting
A freezer, a dryer, and such.
He tried to explain to her gently,
His pay wouldn't cover so much.
One night she kept on with the hubbub,
Till a shot put an end to her goading.
The best automatic appliance, he'd found,
Was the kind you apply after loading.

© 1982 by *Laren Dart*.

Even after seventeen years of marriage it was hard to tell what Don was thinking behind his frank, easygoing exterior. Barbara wondered if it was like that between other husbands and wives . . .

NOBODY'S TOLD YOU, HAVE THEY?

by IAN STUART

Barbara Coates picked up the cake on its stand. It really had turned out quite well, she thought, allowing herself the luxury of a little pride as she carried it through to the dining room. *Happy Birthday, Samantha* was inscribed in pink across the smooth white icing, with more pink round the edge and thirteen candles.

How little time it seemed since she had iced the first birthday cake for Sam. That was on Sam's third birthday, for they had adopted her when she was two. Barbara and Don had been married seven years and it had seemed as if they would never have any children of their own, although the doctors assured them there was no physical reason why they shouldn't. They had adopted Sam and within a year Barbara found herself pregnant with Johnnie. Now she could say with a clear conscience they had never discriminated between the children. Sam and Johnnie were so different, yet in a way they complemented each other.

Barbara supposed that any time now her daughter would want to start using makeup and wearing high heels. A lot of her friends did already. And had had their ears pierced. Barbara could imagine what would have been said if she had wanted to wear makeup and dangly earrings when *she* was twelve! Thank goodness Sam wasn't precocious like that. In some ways she was old-fashioned and she still seemed content to wear prim school blouses and skirts. Secretly Barbara was relieved. Like most mothers, she wanted her daughter to remain a little girl for a while yet.

The rest of the family were seated round the table, Don, the proud

© 1982 by Ian Stuart.

father, at the head. Barbara loved her husband dearly but that didn't stop her acknowledging his faults. For one thing, other women found him attractive and he was susceptible to them. That was as far as it went. He was quite open about it. But in her worst moments the two years by which she was the older seemed to Barbara like ten and she wondered if that was always all there was to it, if he had ever been unfaithful to her. Then, because she loved him and wanted to trust him, she was ashamed of her doubts.

All the same, it was hard to tell what he was thinking behind his frank, easygoing exterior. Even now, after seventeen years of marriage, she sometimes felt there was a part of him she didn't know and understand. Was it like that between other husbands and wives?

Samantha, on Don's right, was like him in coloring with her fair hair and blue eyes but very different in other things. For instance, she was slim while he was tall and strongly built. And she was a very private person. But between them there was the special bond there often is between a father and his only daughter.

Johnnie, on his father's other side, was, like him, a cheerful extrovert. Sometimes Barbara worried about Johnnie.

But today was Sam's day.

"There," Barbara said, putting the cake in the middle of the table. She delighted in taking trouble and making special things for her family and there was a note of satisfaction, almost of triumph, in her voice.

"That looks great," Don declared, smiling at her to show her that in a way this was their celebration as well as Samantha's.

Barbara understood and felt a warm surge of love go through her. How could she ever doubt Don?

"It's lovely, Mummy," Sam said in her quiet way.

"How's your watch going, Sam?" Don asked. "Is it keeping good time?" He and Barbara had given her a watch for a birthday present. It was her first real watch and when she opened the package and saw it in its slim velvet-lined box her eyes had lit up.

"Perfect time, Daddy. Look." She held out her wrist for her father to see and he checked the time against his own watch.

"Spot on," he agreed.

"I know." Samantha regarded him with her unnerving wide blue eyes.

The next day Barbara was in the dining room when Johnnie came home from school. There was a vivid red blotch on his left cheek, he

had the beginnings of a black eye, one pocket of his blazer was half torn off, and he was liberally streaked with mud. Barbara gazed at him in horror.

"Johnnie, what have you been doing?" she exclaimed irritably. He couldn't be hurt—he looked far too smug and pleased with himself—and she had quite enough to do without extra washing and mending.

"I fell over," he answered, avoiding her eyes.

"Is that the truth?" Barbara could never be sure when he was telling fibs. They weren't really lies—he just exaggerated and embellished the truth to make it more interesting.

"Well—" He shifted his feet uncomfortably.

"Johnnie, you must tell the truth," Barbara told him despairingly. "Why can't you be like Sam? She never tells stories."

Maybe he couldn't help it, she thought. Perhaps it was something to do with his genes. Don was just the same. Only he had learned to control his story-telling so that now when he said something that wasn't true he would grin to let her know it was a game. With a sudden pang of uneasiness Barbara wondered if there were times when he didn't grin and she was deceived. She pushed the thought away. Why had she begun thinking things like that? There must be something wrong with her.

"You've been fighting, haven't you?" she demanded.

"Yes, Mum." Johnnie looked more cheerful and not ashamed at all.

"I wish you wouldn't," his mother said, knowing it was hopeless.

He went up to his room and she got on with her work. She was sorting out some mending when Samantha came in. "You're late, darling," Barbara said, looking up at the clock.

"Mrs. Rogers kept us in."

"Oh, Sam! What for?"

"Nothing much. Gwen said something and we all laughed. Mrs. Rogers got mad."

Barbara frowned. She knew better than to inquire what Gwen had said. "That doesn't sound like Mrs. Rogers."

"No, Mummy." Samantha hesitated. "Mummy, you like Miss Peters, don't you?"

"Yes, of course, dear. At least, I don't know her very well but she seems nice."

"And Daddy does, doesn't he?"

"I don't think he knows her really. Why?"

"It's just—" Samantha looked upset.

"What is it, Sam?" Without knowing why, Barbara felt disturbed. But Samantha only shook her head and ran out of the room. Barbara heard her go upstairs and, frowning, went out to the kitchen to start preparing the evening meal. But she couldn't concentrate on what she was doing. What had Sam meant about Don and Janet Peters? Could she have seen them together? There was no getting away from it, the teacher was very pretty with her chestnut-colored hair and slim figure. She had lovely bright eyes too.

It was crazy—Don hardly knew her. They had met at the school's open evening last term. He couldn't have been seeing her since then, could he?

Oh, God, what is the matter with me? Barbara thought.

Twenty minutes later she heard the front door open, then close, and Don came into the kitchen. Barbara told herself she would not let him see she was upset. Whatever happened he mustn't know why. But she couldn't, she wasn't made like that. When he kissed her she put her arms round him and buried her face against his shoulder.

"Hi!" he protested, startled but not displeased. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Oh, Don, I do love you."

"That's good. I love you too." Don grinned and kissed the top of her head. "What's for supper?"

"Roast lamb." Barbara moved her head away from his jacket and groped for a handkerchief. As usual, she couldn't find one and almost automatically Don lent her his.

"What's all this in aid of?" he inquired, looking grave. "Has something happened?"

"No." Barbara made a brave attempt at a smile. "I was just being silly. Forget it."

But Don was still eyeing her anxiously. "Nobody's told you, have they?"

"Told me what?" Barbara asked, all her fears returning.

"I'll tell you later."

"No. *Please*. Tell me *now*, Don."

He shook his head.

"We've got to sit down and think what we're going to do—we couldn't now with you getting supper."

Oh, God, Barbara thought again.

With a terrible numb feeling she watched Don go out of the kitchen and up the stairs . . .

Supper was a quiet meal. Don was preoccupied, Samantha rarely talked much, and even Johnnie was unusually subdued.

"Where's your watch, Sam?" Don asked at last, seeing she wasn't wearing it.

"I left it at school, Daddy. I didn't want it to come off while we were playing netball so I left it in my desk."

"You don't usually have netball on Wednesdays," Barbara said.

"It was only a few of us."

"Will it be all right there?" Barbara was remembering that Johnnie had had two or three things taken at school.

"Oh, yes." All the same Sam looked anxious, as if the possibility of the watch being stolen hadn't occurred to her.

Barbara supposed the janitors were honest. She hoped so—the watch was by far the most expensive present she and Don had ever given one of the children.

The front doorbell rang and Don went to answer it, shutting the door behind him. Barbara could hear voices in the hall but nothing of what they were saying. Then the door opened again and Don came back with two men. She hadn't seen either of them before. The older was about fifty, burly, with short grizzled hair and curiously flat features. The other was much younger and leaner.

"It's the police," Don said. He sounded shocked. "Detective-Superintendent Carter and Detective-Sergeant Jones."

"We're sorry to disturb you," the older man said.

His face was quite devoid of expression, Barbara observed. She looked at the sergeant. His was the same. She found it strangely disturbing.

"Why—?" she began.

"A young lady was found dead this evening," Carter told her. "A Miss Janet Peters. We're making inquiries."

Fear, cold and insidious, struck Barbara. She dared not look at Don. "Miss Peters? Dead?" she echoed, her voice sounding unnatural to her.

The Superintendent appeared to notice nothing. "She was found by a neighbor just before six o'clock," he said.

"But what—?" Barbara kept beginning questions but couldn't find the words to finish them. Couldn't—or daren't? "Sam's in her class."

"Oh?" The Superintendent's tone didn't change.

"My name's Samantha," Sam explained, turning her wide eyes on him.

"I see. Do you happen to know what time she went home today?"

"She was home at a quarter past four. I know because I saw her car outside her house when I came past it. I have to walk that way." Samantha turned to her father. "That's when I saw you, Daddy."

Barbara saw a flicker of interest cross Superintendent Carter's face as he turned to Don.

"Me?" Don said.

"Yes. You were going into her house. You didn't see me, did you?"

"No," Don said. "No, I didn't."

Barbara was staring at him, horrified.

The silence seemed as if it would go on forever. Then the Superintendent suggested, "Perhaps we could go into another room, Mr. Coates. I think that might be less painful for everybody."

"Yes," Don muttered.

"Don!" Barbara said, pleading. But when the three men turned to look at her she flushed and said nothing.

In the sitting room the Superintendent said, "Shall we sit down?"

His tone was informal, almost friendly, and Don wondered if he was displaying the iron fist in a velvet glove. They sat, the two detectives on the settee, Don in an easy chair facing them.

"Your daughter's a truthful little girl, is she?" Carter asked.

Don nodded. "Yes, very."

"So she did see you going into Miss Peters' house about four-fifteen?"

"She must have done."

"You knew Miss Peters?"

"Only very slightly. We'd met at an open evening at the school, that's all."

"Then why did you go to see her this afternoon?"

Don hesitated. Did he have to tell them? If it all came out, Barbara would be hurt worst and he wanted to protect her from that. "She phoned me at my office and asked me to," he answered.

"Did she say why she wanted to see you?"

"Yes."

For several seconds nobody spoke. It was true, Don thought, a silence was like a pool waiting for somebody to drop something into it to break the smooth surface. They were letting him stew in his own juice. Breaking him down. They don't believe me, he thought. They're certain I killed her. Nothing I say will make any difference.

It came as almost a shock when Carter asked quite mildly, "How long were you there?"

"I don't know. About a quarter of an hour, I suppose."

"Did she say anything about expecting anybody else?"

"No."

"Was she worried?"

What could he say? The truth? No. "Not that I noticed," he said.

The Superintendent's normally expressionless features showed surprise. "Really, Mr. Coates? But perhaps worried is the wrong word. Concerned, shall we say?"

"All right," Don agreed. "Perhaps she was concerned."

"That's hardly surprising, is it? In the circumstances?"

"No." Don felt a dreadful helplessness overwhelm him. Whatever he said would make no difference. Because he knew now they knew.

"What did you do when you left her?" the sergeant asked.

"Went back to my office."

"Did you see anybody else near the house?"

"No."

"Do you mind if we have a look round?" Carter asked. "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid it's necessary. If you insist, we'll get a warrant, but it'll only prolong things and it won't make any difference in the end."

"Do what you like," Don told him. He felt defeated, overwhelmed by a terrible sense of not understanding anything any more. And of loss.

Sergeant Jones went out of the room. They could hear him going upstairs, then moving about overhead.

"I know why Miss Peters asked you to go to see her, Mr. Coates," Carter said. He sounded almost sympathetic. "She told the headmaster she'd spoken to you. She was worried about your daughter, wasn't she?"

Don nodded. "Yes."

"She told Mr. Gray your daughter had quarreled with one of the other girls. That same morning their class had a chemistry lesson and after dinner the other girl was taken ill. They wouldn't have thought anything about it but it wasn't the first time something unpleasant had happened to a girl who had annoyed Samantha. There had been three others."

"She said Sam knew what hatred was," Don said dully. "She didn't get angry like most children—she was cold and implacable."

"She'd told your daughter she'd asked you to call, hadn't she?"

"Yes."

The Superintendent reached into his pocket and brought out a

small plastic bag. Something inside it glittered. "Do you recognize this, Mr. Coates?"

Don could see the S COATES where he had written it in white ink on the inside of the strap. "It's Sam's," he replied. "We gave it to her for her birthday yesterday. She said she'd left it in her desk. Where did you find it?" But he knew without the Superintendent telling him.

"It was lying beside the body, covered by her skirt. We think Samantha saw you go into the house and waited until you came out. Then she went in herself."

"She told us her class had been kept in," Don said.

"That wasn't true. The teacher who took them for the last lesson says she saw your daughter going into the library. She knew you were going to see Miss Peters at four-fifteen and she didn't want to be seen hanging about in the street until you came out." Carter paused. "She had probably taken the knife from school. We haven't found it yet. Miss Peters must have grabbed for it and got hold of the watch instead, breaking one of the bars that hold the strap."

"She was stabbed?" Don asked.

"Yes. Several times."

She must have planned it if she had taken the knife with her, Don thought. And waiting until he came out of the house. She had even tried to implicate him with her innocent remark about seeing him. Why?

The sergeant came back into the room, holding something about a foot long with a handle and a pointed blade. "It was in the bottom of a drawer in her dressing-table," he said.



a **NEW** Ganelon story by

JAMES POWELL

Hyppolyte McNab's office in the rue General St. Cyr was a veritable bachelor-antiquarian's den where no cleaning lady ever dared venture. Dust lay thick everywhere, including the inch of shelf protruding from below each row of books in the bookcase. But to his surprise, McNab found the strip of shelf beneath the upper row of books swept clean of dust, as though someone had pulled the books out and then replaced them. And the same thing had happened to another foot of books on the shelf below . . .

THE HAUNTED BOOKCASE

by **JAMES POWELL**

Oboe music and autumn sunlight filled the outer office of the Ganelon Agency. Old Simon the clerk was perched atop a stool at the high desk, recording expenses in a ponderous volume marked "1871". On a long wooden bench nearby sat three of the runners employed by the great detective, their hats on their knees. Whenever the bell on the wall clattered twice, the man closest to the door from which the woodwind strains were now coming would stand up, brush the crown of his hat with his elbow, and step into the inner office. This might prove the first leg of a journey across town with one of Ambrose Ganelon's visiting-card summonses or around the world to the floating Yangtze stronghold of the King of the Chinese River Pirates.

Beyond the low wooden railing in one of the upholstered client armchairs sat a long, lean gentleman in his fifties with large hairy ears and a knob of a nose. He wore a black stovepipe hat, a blue swallowtail jacket with less sleeve than he had wrist, and fawn trousers with straps under the insteps in the style of the generation

© 1982 by James Powell.

before last. Clearly here was a man of business with better uses for his money than fashion nonsense.

But at the same time his steel spectacles rode his nose with a jaunty air as he passed the time with a back issue of the musical periodical *Vox Humana*, provided by Ganelon for just that purpose. And, in fact, if a newcomer had sat down beside him, offered a cigar case and asked what matter brought him to the rue Blondin, the man would have accepted the cigar with pleasure, thanked him for the light with his eyebrows as he leaned into the flame, and then told this baffling little story.

His name was Hippolyte McNab, a dealer in secondhand books whose shop filled three floors of a building on the rue General St. Cyr, his simple living quarters and large office occupying the fourth. McNab's particular skill was buying estate libraries. He claimed he could cast his eye over a room of books and in a twinkling detect an Estiennes, an Aldi, or a tall, untrimmed Elzevir Tasso lurking on the shelves. Sometimes in the case of the elderly or the sickly in need, McNab bought libraries and let the owners keep possession for the remainder of their natural lives. A book-lover himself, he could appreciate the blow to a scholar or collector to lose his library. Besides, in this way he frequently outwitted Ponti, his particular rival in the business. Thus several weeks before, he had come into possession of the books of the Abbe Bonaventure, a popular confessor whose widowed sister, Madame Franck, tended McNab's shop, allowing the bookseller to concentrate on buying and on his sizeable business by mail. Madame Franck's son, Albert, had been pressed for gambling debts. Since Bonaventure's books were all he had of value to pass onto his nephew, he willingly sold them to McNab on the condition of lifetime possession. The priest then gave the money to Albert in place of an inheritance.

Bonaventure's modest estate took a long time to settle. When at last the library arrived, McNab was already behind schedule in preparing his quarterly catalog. Business before pleasure. All he had time to do was to stack the books in the bookcase cleared for that purpose and return to his work.

But the next day Madame Franck came to him all pale and agitated. She had had a terrible dream the night before. In her dream she found herself alone on a moonlit portion of the Quai Kellerman near a flight of stone steps down to the gentle Cornichon while the river fog licked at the topmost step in a most sinister way. Suddenly

she heard her dead brother's voice crying out to her. She turned to see Scheherazade, their pet nanny goat of a childhood long past, emerge from the shadows, pulling a wicker goat cart which contained the little boy her brother had once been.

"Help save my immortal soul, Anna Marie!" cried the child in Bonaventure's mournful, adult voice. Then the apparition went on to admit to her that, although the Bishop forbade the practice, he had been among those confessors who sometimes required penitents to commit their confessions to paper. In this way he could submit their examinations of conscience to prayerful consideration and then return to them with spiritual counsel as well as absolution.

The day of his stroke he had been meditating on just such a confession, written on mauve letter paper, when there was a knock on his study door. He had slipped the document into a book at his elbow. His caller had taken him away from his rooms and before the priest could return he suffered the attack that killed him.

"Anna Marie," the voice pleaded, "by all that's holy, get me the time to find what I have lost! If someone finds that paper among my books, I will have broken the seal of the confessional and damned my immortal soul!"

With these words the goat cart reached the steps down to the river. But in the manner of dreams, the goat now became a grinning, thin-lipped man with chin whiskers and horns on his forehead and the shafts of the cart were Bonaventure's legs under the goat-man's elbows. Slowly and with pitiful cries, the priest was being dragged on his back down the steps into the fog and dark water.

Madame Franck's dream so distressed her that McNab willingly agreed to postpone examining his new acquisitions as long as she liked. After all, he expected to be overwhelmed with work for several weeks until the catalog was printed and in the mail.

McNab neither believed in ghosts inside dreams or out. But he did believe in keeping his word. So it was a couple of weeks before his eyes began to stray to the bookcase and its attractive contents. Surely examining the spines of the books could do no harm. He went over and, starting methodically at the left-hand corner of the upper shelf, he began to read the titles.

Now McNab's office was a veritable bachelor-antiquarian's den where no cleaning lady ever dared venture. The smell of leather bindings and old cigars occupied the air and dust lay thick everywhere, including the inch of shelf protruding from below each row of books in the bookcase. But to his surprise, McNab found the strip

of shelf beneath the upper row of books swept clean of dust, as though someone had pulled the books out and then replaced them. And the same thing had happened to another foot of books on the shelf below. McNab scratched his jaw thoughtfully but could not resolve this mystery.

The next evening as he sat at his desk plying his pencil over the galley sheets of the catalog and eating a modest dinner of bread, cheese, and a half bottle of wine, he remembered the curious circumstances of the day before and went over to examine the bookcase again.

The dustless strip on the second shelf had grown by another foot!

That night before retiring, McNab checked the bolts on all the windows and the skylight in the corner of his office. Then he retired to his canopied bed, leaving the door between his office and his bedroom ajar, for he was a light sleeper at the best of times. Twice during the night when the bells of the Domo tolled a dark hour, McNab armed himself with a lighted candle and emerged from his bed, nightcap, nightshirt, hairy shanks, and all, to investigate the mysterious bookcase. But the strip had not increased in length.

Nor had it grown when he examined it by morning light.

McNab kept to his desk that day until it was almost three. Recently the Booksellers' Guild had decided to decorate its banquet hall with portraits of past presidents. Though McNab was not as active in the guild as he had been before his rival Ponti succeeded him to the presidency, it would have been ungracious not to make himself available for the sittings. Besides, he was familiar with the painter Rollin's distinctive style and had looked forward to meeting the artist.

For a week now at precisely three o'clock McNab had knocked on the door of Rollin's fourth-floor atelier, which, conveniently enough, was only in the next block. The painter had proven to be a bearded red-faced man with little breath and less conversation, who hid himself away behind his easel and seldom poked his head around the edge of the canvas. The bookseller usually passed the time looking out across the rooftops through the window the artist kept open because he said the fresh air helped his asthmatic condition. As chance would have it, McNab could see the bookcase in question, which stood beside one of his own rear windows.

So that day as he left for his sitting, McNab slipped a small brass spyglass into his pocket. Then he locked his office door and sealed

the keyhole with a blob of red wax into which he impressed his intaglio ring.

Once again as McNab entered Rollin's building he remarked the man who was always lounging by the doorway and who observed him carefully over the top of a newspaper. At every opportunity throughout the sitting, McNab whipped out the spyglass and checked the bookcase. But no one came near it. When he ended the session, Rollin once again showed McNab the work in progress and once again the bookseller was impressed with the artist's unique vision.

When McNab returned to his office, the wax in the keyhole was intact. But the dustless strip on the bookcase had grown another foot. McNab slept on the situation and then early the next afternoon he presented himself at the office of the Ganelon Agency.

The oboe music stopped and was followed at once by the rude sound of moisture being blown from a woodwind reed. With a sigh, old Simon slid down from his stool and had already opened the wooden gate in the railing when the bell on the wall clattered once.

"Mr. Ganelon will see you now, Mr. McNab," said the old clerk.

When Simon led the bookseller into Ganelon's office, the stout little detective with the Napoleonic lick of black hair across his forehead stood with his hands clasped behind his back, scowling at a map of the world on which each of his operatives was represented by a white-headed pin and those of his nemesis, that manifold villain Dr. Ludwig Fong, with a black. The detective quickly pulled a cord which drew a curtain over the map and crossed to his desk. The departing Simon had laid the client's visiting card in the middle of the blue-and-grey Bokhara rug, a present from the emir of that province, which covered the desktop.

"Mr. Hippolyte McNab," he read aloud and, without looking up, he gestured McNab into an Empire chair whose obelisk legs rested on gilt sphinxes. The name identified the bearer as a descendant of the Jacobin refugees from whom San Sebastiano's Prince Faustus the Fifth long ago recruited a famous regiment, The Prince's Own Scots Horseguards.

"I apologize for keeping you waiting, Mr. McNab," said the detective, taking his seat. "On busy days the oboe sharpens my powers of concentration."

"A cheery, bagpipey sound, sir," said McNab agreeably.

Ganelon fixed the man with a glower as dark as the pit, searching

for mockery behind those innocent eyes. The bookseller met his gaze without blinking.

"Your story, Mr. McNab?" he demanded. After listening attentively to the details concerning the haunted bookcase, the detective said impatiently, "Mr. McNab, some say my fee is high. Others who place less value on the truth use the word 'excessive'. You are not the kind of man to throw money away because some books were moved. So there is something more to all this, isn't there? It's the coincidence that bothers you, correct?"

"You've hit the nail on the head, sir," exclaimed the bookseller. "I esteem Madame Franck very highly. If she had a dream and asked me not to touch her dead brother's books, I would not, even though I don't believe in ghosts. But when she has her dream and then the books start moving, why, that leaves me perplexed."

"Please describe this lady's character."

"I've never known her to tell a falsehood, if that's what you mean," said McNab. "Nor can her honesty be brought into question. Six years ago, when she started to work for me, I made several deliberate tests of that."

"A sensible woman, I take it?"

"Quite so, as far as the shop is concerned."

"And otherwise?"

McNab hesitated. "Well, I must admit she's overindulged her Albert. I made an effort to like the young man. In deference to her I even gave him work when he was in one of his financial straits. But he's a scoundrel, more suited for the horse whip than a mother's caresses."

Here McNab smiled sadly. "So there we are, sir. Madame Franck is a mother who loves her unworthy son. Hardly a crime." The bookseller paused. "I'll be honest with you, Mr. Ganelon. I had hoped someday to get the courage to ask her to marry this eccentric fellow I seem to have become."

"And now you doubt your intended?"

"Doubt' is a strong word, sir," said McNab. "But I am prepared to pay to learn the truth."

"Then so you shall, Mr. McNab," said Ganelon. "But I'm afraid we must begin with the most probable explanation: that Madame Franck is in league with someone to steal something from Bonaventure's library before you find it. Perhaps the son needs money again. Perhaps mother love has overcome her natural honesty."

"Perhaps," said the bookseller unenthusiastically. "But couldn't Ponti be the one in back of this?"

"You mean the president of the Booksellers' Guild is after some rare volume? I think not. He would only have to read the spines. No, someone is taking the books off the shelf. Why? To find something that isn't a book, like a letter file or a strong box disguised as a book. Or something tucked inside a book, like a will or a map or a baggage check or the combination to a safe. Something that might be found by a quick riffle of the pages. After all, the intruder doesn't have much time. How long were your sittings?"

"Forty-five minutes at most. Usually less."

Ganelon scowled thoughtfully and, without turning, sought the bell cord within reach of his chair. A second later a bright-eyed young man in a grey suit with a brushed hat in his hand was standing before his desk. "Ah, yes, ah—?" began the detective.

"Carnet, sir," said the young man.

"Very good, Carnet," said the detective. "And how is, ah—?"

"My mother, sir," said Carnet. "Much better, sir."

"Just back from—?"

"*Nunc fortunatus*, sir. I was in Lucknow."

"Ah, yes. I've dipped into your report. The close brush with the pariah dogs. The night trapped on the Tower of Silence with the carrion birds. And Suliman Sahib is dead?"

"Killed by his own Green Brotherhood, sir. And the Sacred Banner of Ali has been returned to the Mosque Inside the Mountain."

"No jihad, then. Good. You followed your instructions well. There'll be no holy war. We will talk more about this. And about the elephant rental among your expenses. Did the treacherous charms of the Princess Zenobia have to be experienced by moonlight?"

"A turning point of the investigation, sir."

"Two elephants, Carnet?"

"You warned me to keep my distance, sir."

Ganelon cocked a quick eyebrow. Then he said, "Time for a little change of pace."

As the Church of Saint Fiacre struck a quarter to three, Carnet was examining the lock on the door to the bookseller's office. Next he checked the window bolts. But as he moved a chair to put the bookcase stepladder in place beneath the skylight, something crunched near his foot. Carnet examined the grey powder on the

floor and then mounted to the skylight. When he came down again, McNab was already standing with his pocket watch in his hand.

Five minutes later they were outside Rollin's building. McNab nudged Carnet as the man by the doorway observed them from behind his newspaper. Then, as they started inside, the bookseller laid his hand on his companion's arm. Across the street was a fashionably dressed young man heading back the way they had come. "That's Albert, Madame Franck's son. I've no doubt he's going to pay his mother a visit. Well, I could hardly refuse her that."

They took the stairs to the atelier. When the painter met them at the door, Carnet shook hands and bade McNab goodbye.

Early the next afternoon, old Simon ushered Mr. McNab and Madame Franck into Ganelon's office. The woman may never have been handsome but she had an erect carriage and an intelligent eye. Her mouth had a good-humored, if perplexed, shape to it.

The detective rose and offered them seats, stuffing a fistful of cablegrams into a leather folder. Then he sat back down and said, "Has Mr. McNab explained what this is all about?"

"I thought I'd leave that to you, sir," admitted the bookseller a bit sheepishly.

"Then to state the matter directly, Madame," said Ganelon, "someone has been going through the books that belonged to your late brother."

"I'm not surprised," said the woman. She turned and looked quizzically at McNab. "Nor can I see why it should surprise Mr. McNab. I told him about my dream."

"Ah, yes, your dream," said Ganelon. "Your dead brother's ghost in search of some penitent's written confession, else the seal of the confessional be broken?"

"Yes," insisted Madame Franck.

"You are a religious woman, Madame Franck? You are devout?" asked the detective.

"I like to think I am, sir."

"Are you prepared to swear before all you hold sacred that this dream was as you described it?"

"I am, sir."

Ganelon studied his plump pink fingers lying on the blue-and-grey design of the rug atop his desk. Then he looked up abruptly. "And are you prepared to swear that this dream was your dream?"

After a moment the woman sighed and shook her head. "No, Mr.

Ganelon, I am not." When McNab groaned, she gave him a soft and comforting look. Then she said, "No, Mr. Ganelon. My son Albert had that dream. My boy came to me in a terrible state the next morning. What were we to do? Mr. McNab would never believe anything Albert told him. He never wanted to set eyes on him again. So Albert asked me to go to Mr. McNab and tell him the dream as if it were my own. A white lie at best with my brother's soul in the balance."

"And did your son visit you yesterday while Mr. McNab was sitting for his portrait?" asked Ganelon.

Madame Franck nodded. "My son recently came into a sum of money from one of his many business ventures. He decided to emigrate to Canada, where they say ability does not need social standing to succeed. On the eve of his departure, it occurred to him, thoughtful boy, that I might be unhappy if he didn't let me contribute something to his going away. I had nothing to give but my wedding ring. He was pleased to take it. He sailed with the morning tide."

Ganelon and McNab exchanged glances of good riddance. Then the detective rose. "Thank you, Madame. One of my runners will find you a cab and accompany you back to the bookshop."

McNab, now also on his feet, said, "I respect your intentions in the matter—Anna Marie."

When the woman had left, Ganelon said, "Blind mother love has explained away your coincidence, Mr. McNab. Now as to the matter of the moved books, Carnet had no trouble discovering how the perpetrator entered your office. The intruder cut away the outside putty from one of the panes in your skylight and removed the glass. He could then reach in and unbolt the skylight. Once during the many times that followed when he did this, he accidentally broke off a piece of the inside putty, which fell to the floor where Carnet found it.

"In any event, by dropping down on a rope the intruder could rummage through the books and then go back up the way he came, replacing the pane of glass with soft mastic. But there were only two brief times when anyone could do this without your detecting them: on your way to the sittings and on your way back. But where your departures from your office were predictable, your return was not. From what you told me, that pointed the finger of suspicion in one direction."

Ganelon looked down to consult his large, old-fashioned pocket watch, which was the kind that up-to-date wits described as a me-

chanical turnip. There was a short knock on the door and a broad-shouldered, robust-colored man wearing the rosette of the Legion of Justice in the lapel of his dark suit brushed past old Simon and strode up to the detective's desk. His bearing was decisive and he threw the detective's visiting-card summons down onto the desk with an indignant gesture.

"Thank you for coming on such short notice, Judge de la Marche," said Ganelon. "May I introduce Mr. Hippolyte McNab?"

San Sebastiano's most prominent jurist, who had not noticed McNab when he strode into the room, now sagged abruptly at the sight of the bookseller. Judge de la Marche looked back at Ganelon and gave a shrug. "Apparently I am in your hands. Though I'm damned if I know how."

McNab leaped to his feet. "That's Rollin's voice!"

"Please sit down, both of you," said the detective. "As to the how, Judge, my man Carnet was in a doorway across the street when you left after the sitting, minus beard and painter's smock. His eye is trained for such things. He followed your cab to your house on the Place Scanderbeg. It was as simple as that. Now I'm sure you see no point in withholding those few facts that remain uncovered in this case."

Clearly the Judge did not. "All right," he said.

"Bonaventure and I were the best of friends in student days. Wild horses in tandem, some called us: he the high priest of atheists, I the tsar of all the anarchists. Thank God most young words and deeds as we uttered and did are written on the wind. Unfortunately, Bonaventure and I planned a book to outline our radical ideas.

"When I went to Paris for a year of study at the Sorbonne, we decided to make our book in the form of letters exchanged between friends. But even before I reached the French capital, Bonaventure had become bedfast with the illness which was his first step on the road to the seminary. Nevertheless, we began trading a quarto notebook back and forth between his sickbed and my student garret on the rue des Canettes.

"But Bonaventure's illness quickly turned his atheism into a pallid concoction. That only served to goad me to fresh heights of juvenile rhetoric. Even now I blush, remembering what I wrote. Then one day after delivering the notebook to the café from which the mail coach for San Sebastiano departed, I joined the crowd that had gathered to watch Louis Phillipe review the National Guard. I was nearby when the Corsican Fieschi's infernal machine discharged,

striking down so many. Our book and my anarchy perished in the carnage, too. I returned to San Sebastiano a sober and chastened young man, bent on making the rule of law my life. Not long afterward, Bonaventure began his studies for the priesthood. We quickly drifted apart.

"Then several years ago I was on a hiking vacation in the Alps with some friends and we stopped at a small inn where a coach was changing horses. Among the passengers warming themselves around the fireplace inside was Bonaventure on his way to Vienna for medical treatment. We greeted each other a bit self-consciously after so much time and stood together by the fireplace. Perhaps it was to overcome the awkwardness that he asked me if I remembered the notebook. He told me he'd had it bound with a whimsical title of his own invention on the spine.

" 'Yes,' he smiled, 'few weeks pass when I don't dip into it. Having a little juvenilia at hand helps keep one humble.'

"I didn't bat an eye," continued de la Marche, "but inside I turned cold with fear. Were his words a veiled threat? My dealings with lawyers and politicians teach me to expect the worse. Who knew what kind of man Bonaventure had become? Was he telling me he had the means of making me the laughing-stock of San Sebastiano? Laughing-stocks are not appointed to our High Court, as I soon expected to be.

"Just then the coachman called his passengers back to their vehicle. With a smile and light handshake Bonaventure bade me goodbye. As my hiking companions chattered around me, I stared into the flames with my arm on the fireplace mantel. I am a serious man, gentlemen. My friends call me upright. Others consider me pompous. Personally, I like to think my life reflects credit on the law. I thought I could bear anything for the law. Anything but laughter, it now seemed. Was I completely in someone else's hands?

"I returned to San Sebastiano half convinced I would be approached by Bonaventure again, or by someone else in his name, with the price I would have to pay for my dignity. But no one came forward and I was appointed to the High Court. Bonaventure hadn't realized his power over me. Still, the man's delicate health meant the situation bore watching. It was a simple matter to put Albert, Bonaventure's nephew and heir, under obligation to me. His many scrapes with the law cried out for a benefactor in high places. When his uncle died, he would have willingly allowed me to select a book

from the priest's library as a keepsake of an old friend from student days. Albert was not a young man to put much value on a book.

"Imagine my consternation after Bonaventure's funeral when I discovered his library was the property of Mr. McNab here? There was no way out but for me to steal the notebook myself. Delaying the settlement of the estate as long as I could, I extracted the details of Mr. McNab's habits and operation from the talkative Albert and examined the premises from the front and back.

"Then I went to Ponti of the Booksellers' Guild and offered to finance portraits of himself and living past presidents of the guild. For such a commission, Rollin willingly surrendered his studio to me for an hour each day, no questions asked. The moment Mr. McNab left for his sitting I would drop down from the skylight and give the books the three or four minutes I could afford them and then rush back across the rooftops to the atelier.

"The plan had only one weakness: how was I going to keep McNab from stumbling across the notebook before I found it? I paced. I wrung my hands. I tossed and turned in my desperate bed.

"In the small, frantic hours of the early morning the same day the books finally had to be delivered, I sat nodding in and out of a fitful slumber in my fireplace chair. Of course, I'd heard of Bonaventure's run-in with his bishop about written confessions. And reminiscing in student days, he had told me about the pet goat. As I dozed suddenly the whole concocted dream came to me in a single piece.

"A brilliant stroke! I would pay Albert to tell the dream to his mother as his own. In the next moment the coals in the grate flared up in a light with an odd mauve cast. Yes, and as an added touch I would say the confession was written on mauve paper. The sins of a woman. Albert's mother would appreciate that. And so here we are, gentlemen."

"But my portrait was a Rollin," insisted McNab. "And I saw it grow day by day."

"Our agreement," said de la Marche, "obliged Rollin to do your portrait. Each day he studied you on the street as you arrived for your sitting and when you left he set to work. So I always had progress to show you." Then he frowned. "But come, Mr. McNab. You have me. I offer a considerable sum for the notebook. If that isn't enough, I suggest you publish and be damned. I now see how ridiculous I've made myself trying not to become a laughing-stock."

"You mistake me, sir," said McNab coldly. "I sell books. Blackmail

is not my trade. Come back with me to my office right now. Find your damned notebook and take it away with you. I'm afraid your view of your fellow man may be contagious."

Ganelon stood up. "Some calm, gentlemen, I beg you. Both of you go find this terrible volume and bring it back here. By then Simon will have the first fire of the season burning in the grate. We will destroy this damnable thing with a ceremonial glass."

Within twenty minutes McNab and the Judge were back arm in arm, de la Marche holding a brown leather book. "Bonaventure titled it *Two Babes in the Woods*," he smiled. "One peek inside and my ears are still burning with shame."

Without another word, he tossed the book into the fire, which was crackling to receive it. He was trembling with relief as Ganelon passed him his glass of vintage blue Veronica liqueur. Ganelon gave McNab a glass and poured one for himself. Then he turned to watch the flames feed at the edges of the book and made a toast. "To the follies of youth and old age."

"Amen," agreed the other two.

Then de la Marche said, "I'm in your debt, Mr. McNab."

"Easy enough to get out of that fix, sir," said the bookseller shyly, avoiding their eyes by looking into the flames. "I intend to ask Madame Franck to be my wife. I thought she would be most impressed if her beloved son's good friend on the High Court volunteered to give the bride away."

"With the greatest pleasure," said de la Marche, raising his glass again.

Here Ganelon lay a hand on the Judge's arm and turned him aside. "I hope you understand my fee for all this will leave Mr. McNab considerably out of pocket. I have a sizeable overhead." Ganelon's substantial charges were used to support his worldwide struggle against Fong.

De la Marche bowed. "Please have Mr. McNab's charges billed to me."

As Ganelon was acknowledging this instruction McNab shouted, "Look!"

The fireplace flames held the book in the grate in a firm grip now and, like live fingers, spread it open, revealing a folded sheet of mauve letter paper. As they watched, it seemed to defy the flames. But in the next moment a brown spot spread from one corner until it had consumed the whole. The paper disappeared in flames and its ashes rushed up the flue like a soul seeking heaven.

a **NEW** short story by

DONALD OLSON

Gordon was everything Mrs. Blancher said he was. And more, unfortunately. . .

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

by **DONALD OLSON**

The North Side was not what it used to be. What Nora called the Bad Element had invaded it to the point where hers was about the sole remaining house on Prospect Street that hadn't been converted into flats or allowed to fall into decay. And when two months after her son Harvey had married and moved out of state someone tried to break into her basement Nora decided that a respectable male tenant, rather than a big dog as the police had suggested, would be the best way to restore her peace of mind.

Gordon Chappell nodded understandingly as Nora, with much nervous fluttering of her plump little fingers and extravagant rolling of her forget-me-not eyes, explained all this. She had been surprised to learn that Mr. Chappell was only twenty-three, there was such a settled responsible air about him as he sat listening to her. His neatly groomed chestnut hair, his clean-cut features and sunny smile reminded Nora of those spruce young men from Utah who occasionally, in pairs, came to the door on behalf of the Mormon Church, boys who looked as if they had never heard of rock-and-roll music and would not have been caught dead in a pair of jeans.

Gordon Chappell explained that his mother, who had owned an antique shop in Elmfield, some miles north of Prendergast, had died six months earlier, the house had been sold, and he had moved in with his widowed aunt. The aunt, whose name was Irene Blancher, had planned to remarry soon, however, obliging Gordon to make

© 1982 by Donald Olson.

other arrangements. Mrs. Blancher's letter of reference, in which Gordon's many fine qualities were glowingly enumerated, made such a favorable impression on Nora she decided then and there she couldn't possibly find a more suitable tenant. And so she was most disappointed when she saw the look of dismay on the young man's face when she showed him Harvey's little efficiency apartment in the attic.

"You'll be quite private, as you see," she explained hastily. "The only time you need see me is when you use the stairs and front entrance."

"It isn't that, Mrs. Bellinger. But I'm afraid it's a bit smaller than what I require."

He explained about his mother's possessions, many of which he couldn't bear to part with.

"Furniture, you mean?"

"And other things. Pictures, trunks, dishes. If I ever do get a place of my own I'll want them. In the meantime—there's really no space up here to store anything."

Nora smiled. "Oh, but I've acres of space! A huge basement and that enormous garage! But then I suppose you've a car. You haven't? Why, there you are then. Surely I have all the storage space you could possibly need."

Gordon Chappell smiled and held out his hand. "In that case, Mrs. Bellinger, I'm more than satisfied if you are."

"Please," she said, "call me Nora."

"He sounds too good to be true," remarked Nora's friend Daphne after listening to Nora boast about her new tenant's many virtues.

Nora ignored this grudging observation. "You should see the lovely things he inherited from his mother. I'm just keeping my fingers crossed. The basement's not all that dry. And if those nasty hoodlums should break into the garage—I haven't anything nearly so fine myself. Do you know, two of my lamps went on the blink the first week Gordon was there? He tried to fix them, dear boy, but when he couldn't he insisted I borrow two of his own. Exquisite things. Really priceless."

Nor could she say enough about Gordon's personal charms. "He's more considerate to me than my own son ever was. You know how Harvey couldn't sit down to a meal without crabbing about the food. Not Gordon. He's an absolute dream to cook for. And I would have dropped dead if Harvey ever offered to dry a dish."

Daphne's eyebrows shot up. "You mean you're *feeding* this man?"

Nora's fleshy cheeks were perpetually tinged with the high color of the chronic hypertensive and her blush wasn't too noticeable. "Well, he's such a pet about everything and I did hate to think of him eating alone up there. He's such pleasant company at table, Daphne. Harvey would never open his mouth except to shovel the food in. Before going bowling or chasing after some idiot girl."

"Hasn't this man a girl friend?" Daphne's tone implied the possibility of something irregular in Nora's perfect tenant.

"My dear, he hasn't time for that. He's too busy making plans for the antique shop he plans to open here in Prendergast. Besides, he's a homebody. Enjoys his books and music. You should hear him play the piano. He's like a professional."

"How on earth did he get a piano up those stairs?"

"My piano, silly. Oh, he has one. His mother's. A gorgeous rosewood baby grand. It's in the garage."

Daphne's envious jibes left Nora feeling more than ever satisfied as she traveled home on the bus that afternoon.

When she arrived home somewhat earlier than she had expected she found Gordon standing by the tool shed, a hammer in his hand. She discerned a vague uneasiness in his manner. "Oh dear," she said, "has something else gone on the fritz?"

Gordon looked charmingly contrite. "It was my fault. I hadn't any right to use it when you weren't home. I thought I could fix it before you got back."

"Fix what?"

He led the way into the hall and stood aside for her to enter what she called the Old Parlor.

"I was playing the piano. A bit too *bravissimo*, I'm afraid." He moved to the old upright and struck three of the stained ivory keys, producing a dead clunking sound.

Nora only laughed. "My dear boy, don't look so solemn. It's a wonder this old relic hasn't broken down long before now."

"I suppose it could be repaired," he mused, "but it's hardly worth the cost." His smile blossomed. "You keep worrying so about Mother's piano out in the garage. You'd be doing me a favor if you had it moved in here. At least while I'm still around."

Nora had to admit the rosewood baby grand vastly improved the room's appearance—and she could hardly say no when Gordon in-

sisted that his mother's silver candelabra would add to its beauty. So up it came from the basement.

"Where on *earth* did you find that?" was Daphne's somewhat dubious reaction when Nora, wearing an unflattering, high-necked dress, opened the door to her a few weeks later.

Nora's mouth sagged. "Don't you like it?"

"Lovely material. Where did you buy it—Dorienne's?"

Nora glanced uncertainly at her image in the hall mirror. "You don't like it."

"I didn't say that. But is it really *you*?"

There were times when Nora didn't appreciate her friend's candor. To change the subject, she ushered Daphne into the living room.

"Well, fancy all this!" came the startled reaction. "You've redecorated!"

"Not really," said Nora. "Just replaced a few old things."

"With antiques yet. Don't tell me you bought all this with your bingo winnings. Especially since you haven't been to bingo for the last three weeks."

"I find I'm rather tired in the evenings lately," Nora told her. She was not about to confess that Gordon had subtly discouraged her bingo nights. Mother had disdained bingo.

Daphne's gaze drifted to the low marquetry table in front of the French Provincial sofa. "When you invited me to *tea* I thought you were kidding."

"I've found it makes a pleasant break in the afternoon. Gordon appreciates the custom." As had his mother.

Daphne regarded the three fine china cups beside an ornate silver tea-service. "Someone else joining the party?"

Nora ventured a coquettish smile. "You did say you'd like to meet Gordon."

"Indeed I would." Daphne ran her palm across the sofa cushion. "What was wrong with your old sofa? It was a lot more comfortable."

"Well, actually we had a little accident. Poor Gordon spilled something on the cushions. Rather than have them cleaned he insisted I use his mother's sofa. He was afraid it might suffer from the damp in the basement."

"And the oriental rug? I suppose that's his too?"

"Yes. Lovely, isn't it?"

"So what happens when he moves out?"

Nora replied tartly: "He's not going to move out. Not right away certainly. He feels very comfortable here. Right at home."

"I should think he would," said Daphne drily. "But you still haven't told me where you bought the dress."

Nora fidgeted with the rhinestone button at her throat. "I didn't. It was a gift, from Gordon. Oh, my dear, if you could see all the lovely things in those trunks of his. Such quality." And then, seeing the peculiar look on Daphne's face: "He's right. Why should they go to waste or get moth-eaten? I'm a bit stouter than his mother was, so this had to be altered, but I couldn't hurt his feelings by refusing to accept it—or the other things." She twisted the cameo ring on her finger, trying to avoid Daphne's penetrating gaze.

"But you don't look like yourself in it. It's not your style at all, Nora, if you don't mind my being frank. You're not even acting like yourself. Why are you so fidgety?"

It was true, Nora didn't feel like herself in Gordon's mother's clothes. They weren't at all her style. But when she remembered how pleased Gordon had been. . .

The ensuing tea party was not a success. Even when it was over and Daphne had departed, Nora couldn't have explained the reason. Gordon had been, as always, on his best behavior—impeccably groomed, polite, modest, complimentary—yet Nora couldn't avoid the impression that Gordon had been the teeniest bit *too* polite, pretending to find everything Daphne said amusing or interesting.

When they were alone afterward she said to him: "I hope you weren't too bored, Gordon."

"Why, Nora, as if you could possibly bore me." And it was the slight emphasis on the *you* that condemned Daphne.

For three months Nora enjoyed the illusion of being divinely happy. The difference between Gordon and Harvey was so remarkable, and all to Gordon's advantage, that Nora was able to convince herself week after week that it was indeed a blessing when Harvey had decided to marry and move out. But why then, while logically life should have been a symphony of bliss with Gordon in the house—Nora could not honestly say that he possessed a single fault—did she find herself increasingly disturbed by feelings of what a psychiatrist might have called self-alienation?

Certainly Gordon never gave the impression of *expecting* Nora to compete with Mother. And she was truly flattered when he praised the skill with which she had learned to cook his favorite dishes in

just the way his mother had cooked them. Furthermore, she had taken pride in mastering the difficult Mozart sonata he declared to be one of Mother's favorite pieces. Nora didn't really miss television. It was fun playing duets with Gordon in the evening. She was more than willing to try Mother's way—individually these little accommodations made no real difference to her. Yet taken collectively over the weeks they constituted a subtle and disturbing infringement upon her own personality.

At times she would catch a glimpse of herself in a mirror and for a passing instant almost fail to recognize herself. She could hardly dispute Gordon's taste and he *did* insist that her new hair style was every bit as becoming to her as it had been to Mother, so what in the world was the matter with her? Wasn't she the luckiest woman in Prendergast to have found such an ideal tenant? So caring and thoughtful, so generous.

And how dreadful it would be if Gordon were to move out. Nora was by no means a rich woman. How would she ever replace the furniture, dishes, and bric-a-brac of her own which by mischance and accident had been rendered useless?

Ultimately, as it happened, a much more disturbing example of these changes in decor crystalized the uneasiness that was threatening Nora's peace of mind.

One afternoon, entering Gordon's apartment to do some light dusting—the darling boy was the tidiest creature in the whole wide world—she was about to sweep her duster across the bureau when she stopped short, her gaze fixed on the silver-framed photograph of Gordon's mother. For the likeness confronting her astonished eyes was not Mother's but her own! For a moment she quite lost her breath. Tremblingly she lifted the frame and examined the photograph. Yes, it was one taken from the album she had shown Gordon several evenings ago, the one he had so admired.

Nora looked around the two small rooms. Mother's photograph was nowhere to be seen. Nora tried to tell herself that she should be flattered, but she was not. Her feelings were far more complicated than that. She rose and crossed to the window. Below her, in the neglected garden, Gordon, true to his promise, was attempting to bring some order to the weed-ridden flower beds.

A week later Harvey dropped a bombshell. After phoning Nora from Cleveland with news that he planned to visit her, he arrived to announce that his marriage was already on the rocks. Nora's

shocked surprise at this revelation was measurably greater than Harvey's when he walked in and saw the changes that had taken place in his absence. But then Harvey had always been one to take everything in his stride. Later, however, he listened disconsolately as Nora told him about her young tenant.

"You sound pretty happy with the arrangement," he muttered.

"Oh, divinely." Nora was surprised to realize that she was being less than sincere. Much less.

The reason for Harvey's gloom became clear: "I wrote to Perkins. He told me I could have my old job back."

"You mean you're moving back to town?"

"Yes." And then, ruefully: "I'd sort of hoped I could move back *here*."

A month earlier Nora would have greeted this proposal with alarmed disapproval. The prospect of losing Gordon, of resuming the sort of life she had led with Harvey in the house, his constant bickering and ingratitude, would have left her heartsick. She might even have refused to consider it. But now, to her own astonishment, she was aware of nothing so much as a profound relief, almost as if she had been suffocating and Harvey had arrived to rescue her.

"Oh, dear," she said, "how on earth am I to tell poor Gordon?"

Harvey shrugged. "I'll do it if you want me to."

"I think not, dear. Best you leave it to me. Gordon's terribly sensitive."

Breaking the news to Gordon was by far the hardest thing Nora had ever been called upon to do. He had every right in the world to be furious. After all, what she was doing amounted almost to a betrayal. Consequently she was reduced to tears of gratitude when Gordon, the angel, while expressing the deepest shock and disappointment, remained as sweet as always and just as considerate of Nora's feelings throughout the painful interview. She would have sat there boo-hooing and apologizing all afternoon if he hadn't cut her short.

"Nora, you're perfectly right. What choice *do* you have? This is your house and he's your son. Cheer up. I wouldn't have stayed forever anyway. When do you want me to leave?"

"Well, Harvey brought all his things with him, but he'll simply have to sleep on a cot in the Old Parlor until you've made other arrangements. And, Gordon dear, you're quite welcome to store whatever you care to in the basement and garage until you can move everything."

"What about Harvey's car?"

"I understand he had to sign that over to his wife as part of the separation agreement. Oh, Gordon, what will you do? Might you be able to move back with your aunt—at least for the time being?"

Gordon shook his head. "I'm afraid that wouldn't be convenient for her. Or me. I mean now that I've all but decided on a location for my antique shop."

This was news to Nora. In fact she had begun to wonder, despite Gordon's constant talk about plans for the shop, whether he was entirely serious about the project, whether indeed it was no more than a pleasant fantasy. But now his considerate attitude only aggravated her feelings of guilt. Poor Gordon—to be forced to uproot himself when she was sure he felt he had found himself a permanent home. If only she could do something to help him. Thinking upon this, she wondered, in spite of what he had said, if it would do any harm for her to appeal to Irene Blancher on the off-chance she could be persuaded to allow Gordon to stay with her, if only temporarily. Nora remembered her glowing letter of reference, and after all Mrs. Blancher *was* his aunt.

On one of the packing boxes in which Gordon had brought some of his belongings Nora had seen his aunt's name and address. She couldn't remember the street, but there couldn't be many Blanchers in Elmfield, and it was only a two-hour bus ride. Nora decided a personal appeal might be more successful than a letter or phone call. And what a delightful surprise for Gordon if she were to succeed in her mission.

Locating Irene Blancher proved even easier than Nora had expected. She was the only Blancher in the phonebook. Nora took a taxi to the address—a handsome, well kept Victorian house in a fine residential neighborhood.

The matronly silver-haired woman who came to the door greeted Nora pleasantly, but with a singular expression of surprised curiosity as her eyes took in the plump little woman on her doorstep. Presently, settled in the comfortable living room, Nora explained the purpose of her visit. Irene Blancher's reaction was not at all what Nora had expected.

"My dear Mrs. Bellinger, I'm sorry you made the trip for nothing. In the first place, I'm not Gordon's aunt or any relative at all. And I wouldn't take him back for all the tea in China."

She laughed at Nora's crestfallen expression. "Forgive me, but it's all rather amusing in a dreadful sort of way. And you needn't have

made up that story about needing the apartment for your son. I quite understand."

Nora flushed. "It's not a story. It's the absolute truth."

"Is the truth *ever* absolute, Mrs. Bellinger? Not in this case, I feel sure." She nodded at the pearls around Nora's neck. "I guessed what was coming the moment I saw that necklace and that dress you're wearing. Mother's, were they not?"

Nora fidgeted under Mrs. Blancher's cool amused scrutiny. "What exactly are you saying?"

"I'm saying I've been through it all myself. Oh, yes, I knew Gordon's mother. We were friends, but only casually. Gordon was always devoted to her—excessively so—and I felt sorry for him when she died. And when he suggested he might stay here until he made permanent arrangements, I was willing to oblige. And then it started. Goodness, he began to take over my life! It all happened so gradually I scarcely realized it—until one day I woke up and scarcely knew who I was, myself or Mother. I'm exaggerating, of course, but I'm sure you know what I mean.

"I'm not certain Gordon altogether realized what he was doing. Then again maybe he did. He's sick, you know. I mean that. Anyway, it got to the point where I felt—smothered. I had a gentleman friend who had been pestering me for years to marry him. I didn't want to. I didn't ever want to marry again. But I got to feeling sodesperate I agreed I would. Gordon was always very polite to Henry, but I don't think he liked him at all. And Henry loathed Gordon. Frankly, the only reason I agreed to marry Henry was to get rid of Gordon. It seems so ridiculous now, looking back, but at the time I felt there was no other way out. Well, you know what Gordon's like. I hated to hurt the poor boy."

Nora listened with a growing sense of confusion and dismay. "I trust you made the right decision," she murmured.

Mrs. Blancher smiled. "Oh, I'm quite happy now, thank you. I'm not so sure I would have been with Henry."

"You didn't marry him?"

Mrs. Blancher sighed. "I never had a chance. Poor Henry died. They found him dead in his car, in his own garage, the engine running, the garage doors closed. He was rather a heavy drinker and it was assumed he had fallen asleep in his car and was asphyxiated."

"How dreadful for you."

"Yes."

"This was before Gordon moved out?"

"Just before. Poor dear, he pretended to be so sympathetic. Actually, he was delighted, of course. Only I fooled him. I told him it made no difference, he'd still have to move out. *I* did a bit of pretending too, said I had to get away for a long time to get over the tragedy. I took a trip around the world."

Remembering the letter, Nora accused the other woman of misrepresenting the truth about Gordon. Irene Blancher disagreed. "My dear, I didn't write a single word that wasn't God's truth. Gordon is everything I said he was. And more, unfortunately."

Nora scarcely noticed the passing scenery as she rode the bus home. Here she had been crucifying herself for betraying that wretched boy while all the time he had deceived her. Lied to her about his "aunt." Yet how could she be angry with him? He *was* indeed all the things Mrs. Blancher had said he was: polite, generous, amiable, neat. But sick too, yes. No doubt about it. Still, this was hardly as consoling a thought as it might have been. Why *hadn't* Irene Blancher simply tossed him out? For that matter, why *hadn't* she, once she perceived what was happening? Was she any less sick than Gordon?

Well, thank goodness Harvey was back home. *She* would never be able to afford a trip around the world.

Nora had told Gordon and Harvey that she would be spending the day with Daphne, and now, arriving home, she was about to enter the house when Gordon called to her from the garden.

He was in his shirtsleeves and dripping with sweat. Alarmed, Nora rushed to him. "My dear boy, what in mercy's name have you been doing? You look quite exhausted."

Gordon passed the back of his hand across his forehead. "You didn't think I'd go away without finishing what I started, did you? Come look. I've transplanted all the roses."

Astonished, Nora contemplated what must have been a month's work completed in one afternoon. She could have wept. The adorable, idiotic boy! Who else, under the circumstances, would have dreamed of being so scrupulous in keeping a promise?

Words failing her, she fled into the house. An envelope propped on the hall table immediately caught her eye.

Nora read the short typewritten letter in stunned disbelief. "Changed my mind—know you don't really want me back. I'm going

out West to look for a new job. Don't worry. The change of scene will do me good. —Harvey."

Clutching the letter, Nora tottered to the living room and collapsed on the sofa. What a ghastly turn of events! She could hardly breathe as the significance of what it meant in terms of Gordon bore into her. Nothing had changed. Nothing, nothing. . .

Presently she heard Gordon upstairs taking a shower, and singing. It occurred to her she had never heard him sing before. And so joyfully! His voice carried all the way down from the attic apartment.

Nora was standing by the window looking out at the garden when Gordon came down. The rich brown texture of the raw soil banked around the roses looked black as coal in the shadow of the high brick wall. What a very odd place for him to have planted roses—that secluded corner of the garden rarely got a ray of sunlight.

At the first tremulous notes from the piano in the Old Parlor a feeling of the most profound despair swept over Nora. Gordon began to play a Chopin nocturne, then paused, a smile in his voice as he called to her from the other room.

"Nora, come listen to this. You'll love it. It was one of Mother's favorites."

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 1930, Marion, Ohio 43305.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send us your current mailing label with new address.

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 593rd "first story" to be published in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. The author, Kate Seago, is a floral designer who has kept a notebook of poetry and plot ideas for years. The plot of her first story was suggested by her husband, a former policeman. "I have a live-in technical advisor!" she says, adding, "My husband and ten-year-old son have been unusually supportive of my writing, typewriter at midnight and all." And how proud the Seago men must be of that, and of Mrs. Seago, now.

The puzzle cube Lisa had given Mitch for his birthday went with him on the subway to and from his classes at the Police Academy. He worked on it at breaks and during lunch. He tried to solve it over coffee after dinner. He'd even sneaked a few minutes with it when he was drafted for duty at the Edwards Street Precinct House. . .

THE PUZZLE CUBE

by **KATE SEAGO**

Mitch Hilliard stretched out on the sofa of his new apartment and picked up the puzzle cube from the coffee table. These things were invented to drive people like me nuts, he thought. Darn Lisa for giving him the blasted thing for his birthday anyway. He had come close to solving it dozens of times, twisting the interlocking pieces around into alignment—except for that ever elusive last twist or two.

This was a miniature of the famous puzzle, made to fit on the end of his keychain. Because it was small and portable, Mitch's addiction was complete. The cube went with him on the subway to and from his classes at the Police Academy. He worked on it at breaks and during lunch. He tried to solve it over coffee after dinner. He'd even sneaked a few minutes with it last week when the Edwards Street

© 1982 by Kate Seago.

Precinct House was shorthanded and he had been drafted for duty. He spent most of the day answering the phones and keeping an eye on the desk, but in a spare couple of moments he'd worked the infernal cube.

It was almost midnight and Mitch was about to turn in when there was the sound of two gunshots from the alley below. He ran to the window but his view of the alley was obstructed by a window awning on the lower floor. As he grabbed his jacket and gun from the hall closet he heard a man in the alley yell, "Freeze! Police!" Mitch heard two more shots as he ran down the stairs to the lobby, cursing the lateness of the hour and the fact that his phone wasn't yet connected.

There was no sound from the alley as he opened the back door of the building and cautiously moved behind a red Volkswagen parked next to the door. At the far end, the alley was blocked by a rented moving van. Next to the truck three figures were illuminated by the service lights of the buildings that bordered the alley. One man, with a scruffy beard and tattered clothes, was sprawled on his side near the wall of Mitch's apartment house. He was moaning softly, but as Mitch watched he lapsed into unconsciousness.

His plight went unnoticed by the other two. One of them, standing with his back to the victim, was tall and slender, his clothes dirty and torn. He looked as if he hadn't washed or shaved in weeks. But the chromed Walther PPK he held aimed at the man in front of him was spotless.

Across the narrow alley, facing him, the third man crouched in combat firing position. Clean-cut and clean-shaven, with a stocky muscular frame, he seemed the exact opposite of the other two. In his hand was a .38 aimed at the stomach of his adversary.

Mitch pulled his gun with one hand and held up his badge case with the other. "O.K.! Police! Drop the guns! Now!"

The stocky man didn't take his eyes off his opponent as he yelled back, "Don't shoot! I'm a cop! If I put my gun down this guy's gonna blow me away like he did the other dude!"

"Don't you believe it, man!" cried the scruffy one. "I'm Officer O'Brien, Narcotics!"

"This creep's giving you a line, kid," warned the other. "I'm Kemp, badge number 2636, Edwards Street Precinct. These two have been ripping off apartments and they got in an argument. He shot his partner there. I'll call the precinct house. You hold him here. I'll get a backup and an ambulance for his buddy."

"Hold it," cautioned the bearded man. "This is my partner, all

right. Kemp—or whatever his name is—shot him. We've been working this guy for a week now. Tonight a snitch burned us—he was getting ready to split. He was loading up when Dave got here and Kemp shot him. Along with his furniture, there's probably a quarter of a million in dope in that van."

"He's lying, kid," Kemp yelled.

"He was ready to beat feet out of here when I pulled up," his opponent countered, his eyes and gun steady on Kemp. "We were even up until you got here. Come on, cover him while I take his gun. You can't leave me here without a backup until he puts his weapon down or you'll have two ambulances to call. He'll shoot me too as soon as you leave."

Mitch's mind scanned his brief police education, trying to remember something that would help him sort out the truth. He needed a solution, and he needed it fast. The growing pool of blood next to the fallen man told him he needed help immediately.

"Let's see some I.D."

O'Brien sighed. "I've been undercover for weeks. I don't exactly run around with a badge pinned to my shirt."

"What about you, Kemp?"

"I was in bed when I heard the shots. I just grabbed my pants and my gun. My I.D. is in my uniform up in my apartment."

"If you're a cop," Mitch asked him, "tell me about Edwards Street. Who's the daytime desk sergeant?"

"Hancock."

"What's he like?"

"A little shrimp, grey at the temples, heavy set. Has a laugh that grates on your nerves and makes you want to punch him out."

Mitch had to agree with that.

"You, O'Brien. What's the main phone number at the desk?"

"555-7439."

Two right answers. What now?

"Kemp. Describe the west side of the station layout. Then, O'Brien, you do the same for the east side."

Kemp shifted his weight back and forth angrily. "You're wasting an awful lot of time, kid. The creep's bleeding to death while you're playing Twenty Questions."

"Just answer me."

"O.K., kid, but your superior's gonna hear about it."

"There's a long bench runs the length of the west wall, with tables

in the middle of the floor for writing reports. The dispatcher and phone room are on the north side. Floor's green cement."

"Now you, O'Brien."

O'Brien paused, as if seeing the room in his mind. "Man, you know he didn't tell you anything he couldn't know by being taken through there when he was being busted. O.K. There's three pay phones against the south wall. The desk is on the east side. The temporary holding tanks are through the door on the east wall." O'Brien gave him a quick glance. "Where do you work, man? I don't remember you from the station."

"I'm still at the Academy. I worked at Edwards Street last week to fill in for a guy who was out sick."

"A rookie," said Kemp. "It figures."

"Yeah," said Mitch, "but if you're who you say you are you'd better help me figure this one out."

"Look," said O'Brien, "if it helps any I can tell you more about Edwards Street. I used to work the desk before I came to Narcs. The holding tanks are right behind it. The only place you can see into them is from behind the desk. The phones are on the right side as you face the tanks, and the keys for the equipment lockers and cars are on the board to the left."

Kemp flicked his eyes from O'Brien to Mitch for a split second. "Hey, I know you. You're the kid they sent over to work the desk. I saw you goofing off with one of those puzzle cubes when you thought no one was around."

Mitch stared at both men for a minute. "There are two too many guns in this mess. Both of you put your left hand on your head, then put your weapons on the ground nice and slow. Put your foot on the gun and stand up. Get that other hand on top of your head as soon as you put the gun down. I mean it—no cute stuff. Now do it."

Both men leaned over, left hands on top of their heads, never taking their eyes off each other. The guns hit the ground together.

Almost at the same instant, both men grabbed their guns again. Mitch aimed directly at Kemp's shoulder and fired. At the same moment, O'Brien fired two quick rounds into the stocky man he had been holding off. All three shots hit home and Kemp was flung back against the moving van. Mitch called to O'Brien, "Check your partner—I'll get help!" and he ran.

As the second ambulance moved off, O'Brien asked Mitch. "You O.K.?"

Mitch nodded. "You?"

"Yeah. My partner's going to be off the streets for a long time, but he'll be back. Did you get a chance to look in the van before the lab started?"

Mitch nodded again. "You were right about the drugs."

"You sure picked Kemp off fast when he went for his gun."

"I was waiting for him to make his move. I knew you were genuine, but I couldn't take the chance he'd fire on me. With both guns down, I could then tell you to pick up yours and cover him while I called for help."

"Good thinking. But how'd you know? His answers were pretty good."

"Too good. What you said about the holding tanks finally sunk in when he was telling me he saw me working on the cube. I'd been careful no cops would see me—the sergeant and the others were out or at lunch and I was behind the desk, so the only way he could have seen me working the cube was if he was in the holding tanks. I never saw him, but he sure must have seen me."

O'Brien patted Mitch's shoulder. "Not bad. You'll be a detective before you know it. See you around." He slouched off down the alley toward his Volkswagen and Mitch headed back upstairs.

Lisa picked up Mitch's keys and played with them distractedly before realizing she was holding an old-fashioned rabbit's foot, not the modern cube puzzle.

"Hey, Mitch," she kidded him gently, "What did you do with the cube I gave you? Did you wear it out?"

"Not exactly," Mitch said. "But it sort of lost its fascination for me. If I'm going to get anywhere in policework I'm going to have to keep my mind on the job."

"Q"

a **NEW** short story by

GEORGE BAXT

Another George Baxt "special"—another sly, smooth, sophisticated peek into people by an author who is carving out a criminous territory all his own . . .

CLAP HANDS, THERE GOES CHARLIE

by **GEORGE BAXT**

At nine o'clock one Wednesday morning Alice Carruthers sat at the neatly laid table in the breakfast nook, toying with a withered piece of buttered toast. She stared into her third cup of black coffee as though it were a crystal ball, but it told her nothing she didn't already suspect. She was positive Charles, her husband, was having an affair with another woman.

She propped up her chin with the palm of her left hand and stared out the window at the East River. In the background a garbage scow drifted lazily past her line of vision; in the foreground two men were jogging side by side on the path that occasionally invited the attentions of the friendly neighborhood muggers. If she craned her neck, she could see a bit of Gracie Mansion, the mayor's residence, but to Alice it was just an ugly relic that New York should have demolished years ago.

"Clap hands, there goes Charlie." Alice smiled at the memory of her older and wiser sister Rita on that Sunday ten years ago when Alice had married Charles Carruthers. "That's a long winding trail of broken hearts he's leaving behind. How come you drew the lucky number?"

"I was hard to get," Alice remembered replying, also remembering

© 1982 by George Baxt.

those months before he proposed when every nerve in her body seemed to scream, "Charlie, Charlie, give me Charlie, I must have Charlie." He was so handsome. He still is, but add ten years to the portrait. Not quite six feet tall, amazingly muscular for someone in publishing who was known only to exercise with glasses containing very dry vodka martinis or very wet bloody Marys. And those blue blue eyes. Those incredible blue blue eyes against which, in Alice's prejudiced observation, Paul Newman's paled. Ten years later Charlie was still a formidable presence now much given to absence, such as like where was he last night until three a.m.? And why did he sleep in the guest room?

Poor sister Rita. Poor dead sister Rita. "Rita," Alice had asked her during a confrontation in Rita's apartment, "have you been having an affair with Charlie?"

She remember Rita sitting at the vanity table trying to make her fallow face healthy through the aid of any number of cosmetics. "Past tense, sweetheart. I was the penultimate fling before he married you. After me came that peculiar authoress from Canada, you know, the one with three names and one plot." Alice couldn't remember any of the three names because after two books Charlie's publishing house dropped her and she hadn't been heard from since. "Then mother died and you decided to repatriate yourself from London," where Alice's affair with a notorious Shakespearian star had come to an end—"and Charlie's big eyes lighted you up and here you are, Mrs. Charles Carruthers."

Alice remembered Rita's eyes locking with hers in the vanity-table mirror. "My God, you haven't been married a year yet and you suspect he's cheating?" Alice nodded solemnly. Rita then shrugged, resumed applying the unbecoming shade of rouge, and said through a hollow chuckle, "Clap hands, there goes Charlie."

Five years and seven suspected extracurricular Charlie-affairs later Alice made peace with herself about Charlie. She wanted him and she got him and she would make do with what she had. In his own way Charlie loved her. He never flaunted those clandestine romances in her face and as his star ascended in the world of publishing, so did their financial status and their social rating.

They always got preferential treatment from Elaine at her celebrated Eastside watering hole, and the heads of many a maître d' in the city's most expensive restaurants seemed to barely miss scraping the floor as the toadies bowed them to a table. Charlie was now

a partner in the firm of Dickens and Welles, and the authors he continued to edit were a superb Who's Who in the world of literature.

Alice sighed and glanced at her wristwatch. It was past nine a.m. Normally Charlie would be in his office by now going through the mail and dictating to his faithful and loving and unattractive secretary, Clara Kule. Then Alice had a thought: maybe Charlie had left the house before she awakened. But after only three hours of sleep? Then Alice had another thought and this one almost made the blood drain from her face. Maybe Charlie's dead.

"Clap hands, there goes Charlie."

She left the breakfast nook and went into the living room. Charlie's topcoat and his briefcase were on the divan where he had flung them when he came home. The briefcase was open and several manuscript pages had fallen on the carpet. Alice picked them up. The pages had been heavily edited. She read some of the top sheet and shook her head in disbelief. What junk. What trash. Conversations with the dead.

Charlie had explained to her months ago that he had to take on certain books he disliked but he knew the public wanted to read. He knew because smarter publishers had recognized the trend earlier and were saving themselves from bankruptcy by publishing books that boasted lurid dust jackets and screaming two-word titles such as "The Scream," "The Shriek," and one called "The Thumb," which she never had the courage to investigate.

Alice carefully replaced the manuscript pages in the briefcase and was about to enter the guest bedroom when the telephone rang. It was three more shrill rings before she intercepted the nearest extension which was on a table next to the divan.

"It's me!" trilled the gay voice at the other end. Alice recognized Minna Walsh, one of the few friends left from the "old gang," the starry-eyed aspirants to theatrical celebrity of those wonderful days (were they really?) before she became the British Shakespearian star's idiotic camp follower and trailed him to his home in London. "Can we meet a little earlier today? I've got something special on for both of us at two o'clock promptly and I'm sure it's going to be a hoot."

Minna frequently came up with "hoots." A wealthy widow, she gave up the theater when she married Herman Walsh, a successful Westchester dentist who, Minna explained when they became engaged, "Looked in my mouth and it was love at first sight."

"What kind of hoot?" asked Alice.

"I'll tell you when I see you. Right now I'll be late for the beauty parlor and they need all the time I can give them. So twelve thirty at Joe's, okay?"

"Fine by me." Alice replaced the phone on the receiver when Charlie entered from the guest room. He was naked except for a bath towel strategically tied around his waist. His left cheek was raked with four nasty scratches. "What happened to you?" she asked even though her mouth had gone dry. Charlie continued on to the kitchen. As he went past her she heard him mutter, "Nothing serious."

"Those scratches look ugly!" she called after him. "Let me put some peroxide on them."

"I already have." He turned in the doorway of the kitchen. "Do me a favor. Call the office. Tell Clara I'm not coming in today. I'm working at home. You having your usual lunch with Minna?"

"Yes." He went into the kitchen and she dutifully went to the phone. The usual lunch with Minna. Every Wednesday. Lunch with Minna at Joe's, a theatrical hangout in the theater district, and then a matinee. The usual lunch. The usual Minna. The usual Wednesday.

"What usual Wednesday?" asked Clara at the other end of the phone.

Alice was startled. "Did I say that?"

Clara cleared her throat and said, "You said, the usual Wednesday. Maybe it's the title of a book?"

"Not that I know of."

"He's not sick or anything, is he?"

"No, . . . not sick . . . or anything. He's just decided to work at home."

"Well, that's an awful lot of appointments I've got to reschedule. And Mrs. D. due at twelve is hell on wheels about punctuality. I better get on to her right away. Okay, Mrs. C., I'll take care of everything." Good old dependable Clara. Had she opted for spinsterhood because she preferred being dependable to being married? Should Alice have tested for that television series instead of marrying Charlie?

"I'd probably be a has-been by now."

"What the hell are you talking about?" She had entered the kitchen where Charlie stood at the counter drinking a cup of black coffee.

"Do you want some eggs or something? Some fresh toast?"

"Nothing, thanks."

"What's wrong?"

"For Pete's sake lay off!" He slammed the cup onto the saucer and left the kitchen. Alice knew better than to pursue and worry him. Instead, she examined both pieces of china to see if they'd been damaged, and they hadn't been. She tidied up because this was the maid's day out. She wondered about preparing some lunch for her husband. She continued wondering while she bathed, then anointed herself, carefully made up her face, and carefully chose her wardrobe.

When she was ready to leave to meet Minna, she found Charlie seated on the divan in the living room wearing slacks, sports shirt, and scuffed loafers. He was making notes in the manuscript he'd brought home the night before.

"Any good?" asked Alice.

"This?" Charlie indicated the manuscript. "Unadulterated junk."

"I read a page this morning. Some of the manuscript fell on the floor when you came home last night."

"No, I threw them on the floor. I hate this book. I hate myself for publishing it. I hate myself lately for a lot of things and I owe you a world of apologies for how badly I've been behaving lately, but now isn't the time. So you'll forgive me if I return to this pile of tripe. I'm expecting the author at twelve thirty."

Alice stared at him and then asked, "Shall I prepare some lunch? I could do a salad or something light like that."

"No, thanks. I'll phone out and have something delivered. Give my love to Minna."

"Will do." She was in the foyer when he shouted her name. She crossed back to the living room and stood in the entrance with a quizzical expression on her face.

"How's about dinner tonight? Someplace downtown for a change. Let's go to Little Italy. I've got a sudden craving for some rich Italian food."

"It's a date," she said, favoring him with what she hoped was one of her most delicious smiles.

Five minutes later, seated in the back of the taxi heading downtown, she wondered why he told her he was expecting the author of that junk at twelve thirty. Did he really consider her such a fool? Did Charlie really think she was an idiot? Didn't he realize by now she was a past master at putting two and two together?

The author of that junk about life after death was his current sweetie. It was her fingers that had raked his cheek last night. And

then after they kissed and made up, he remembered that the next day was Wednesday, Alice's usual lunch day with Minna, and that the coast would be clear. How could he? She clenched her fist as she stared out the window. How could he bring her into our home? To her knowledge, he had never done that before. But today he was entertaining the author of that junk.

Alice had a feeling of *déjà vu*. (How had Minna once put it? "Tippecanoe and *déjà vu*!") Over a decade ago in London, Alice had returned to the *pied-à-terre* she occasionally shared with her Shakespearean superstar to find him in a compromising situation (to put it delicately) with one of the juveniles in his company. "I don't know what you're so upset about!" he had sputtered, showering spittle all over the sitting room. (His spray was almost as famous as he was. His devoted audiences were wise enough to book their seats at least five rows away from the stage apron. It remained for the tourists to sit up front and get drenched.) "I mean as an American you should quite understand what I'm up to. What do you call it there? Of course! Diversification!"

Ten minutes later, seated across from Minna at their favorite table near the bar, Minna asked, "Why so down in the mouth?" Alice told her. She could always trust Minna. Minna didn't find Charlie in the least bit sexy and said so aloud, especially when Charlie was within earshot. "That calls for some bloody Marys." Minna flagged a waiter, gave him instructions, then redirected her words at Alice. "Listen. If he's making such a thing about taking you to dinner in Little Italy tonight, then he's giving the other one her walking papers."

"You're sure?"

"Very sure. He couldn't very well do it in the office, could he, not with Clara tuning in. Obviously he let her have the bad news last night which won him his stripes." She glanced at her wristwatch. "At this very moment he's giving her the *coup de Grace* or whatever the hell her name is. Forget it. You knew what Charlie was all about when you married him. You got what you wanted and you've lived with it this long. Believe me, there's little better out there. My late darling did plenty of kadoodling of his own. I was no fool. While he grew hot I kept my cool. Our doctor kept warning him he was overtaxing his heart, but, oh, well, he went and here I am, rich and cosy and guess where I'm taking you at two p.m. sharp."

"I give up," said Alice while the waiter served their drinks.

"We're going to a séance."

Alice roared with laughter. "Are you mad?"

"No, just looking for some fun. Don't be a spoilsport. Say you'll come with me."

"Well, of course I'm going. I wouldn't miss it for the world."

What a weird day this is, Alice suddenly realized. It's a day that's completely out of focus. It's surreal, with settings by the late Jean Cocteau.

"You've heard of Monica Duval, of course."

"Of course." Alice sipped her drink.

"She's got this marvelously bizarre studio over at Carnegie Hall."

"You've been there before?"

"For drinks. Not to a séance."

"You know this Duval woman socially?"

"Just the one time for drinks. She was at that do at the Gastons a couple of weeks ago. We were introduced, got to talking"—Minna's voice was now singsong—"realized we had some people in common, she invited me for drinks and then this morning called and invited me to the séance."

"Does she know I'm coming?"

"Oh, sure. I told her last week about our Wednesday ritual. When she invited me for lunch on Wednesday and I said, sorry not on Wednesday, because Wednesday belongs to my good old buddy Alice and me." Minna patted Alice's hand. "And we certainly are good old buddies, aren't we, darling."

"We certainly are." Alice lifted her glass in a toast. "Here's to us. The good old buddies."

At promptly two p.m., Alice and Minna arrived at Monica Duval's studio above Carnegie Hall. The door was opened by a middle-aged woman who spoke with a trace of French accent. She led them into the main room where there was a round table which accommodated six chairs. Alice counted the chairs and thought to herself, *Madam Duval likes to keep her séances intimate.*

There were three people already seated at the table, two middle-aged men and a dumpy woman so badly dressed she had to be uncommonly wealthy. She was obviously married to the man on her right who kept referring impatiently to a very old and very grand pocket watch. Alice and Minna took two seats and then Alice whispered to Minna, "I thought our hostess was very strict about punctuality." It was ten minutes past two.

"How did you know that?" asked Minna.

"I remember reading it someplace." Monica Duval had given in-

interviews to the women's page editor of the *Daily News* and to a feature writer for *New York* magazine. Alice read them both. The other clients stirred as what seemed like a cyclone came hurrying into the room.

"I am so so sorry, my darlings! But I had an urgent appointment at the other side of town and traffic is horrendous when it's normal, but on a Wednesday when all those taxis are hurtling pell-mell to the theater district it is simply *incroyable*, absolutely incredible, but here I am and ready to begin!"

Alice studied the amazing woman as she greeted Minna and the three others, exchanging meaningless pleasantries with the four, as though knowing Alice would require some time to study her. Monica Duval seemed to be in her early thirties. She was of medium height, seemed beautifully proportioned, and had exquisite skin. Her eyes were a seductive sepia and she wore a plain but beautifully cut black dress with a single strand of pearls around her neck. Alice heard Minna introduce her name.

"Mrs. Carruthers," said Madam Duval with a gracious, welcoming nod of her head. "How nice to meet you."

"Thank you. I'm looking forward to this meeting."

"I'm so glad. Is there anyone in particular you'd like to reach in the afterworld?" Alice thought of all the people she couldn't get hold of in this world and wished Madam Duval could materialize an elusive plumber. "Perhaps your sister Rita?" coaxed Madam Duval.

Alice was glad her hands were clasping her purse under the table, out of sight of the others. She was positive her knuckles had gone ivory-white. She managed what she hoped was a clever smile. "Did you know my sister Rita? She was a brilliant dress designer."

"I know all about your sister. Would you like me to try and contact her?"

"Yes. By all means."

Madam Duval was looking inscrutable. Her assistant, an old woman, had drawn all the curtains and there was solitary red light strategically situated over Madam Duval's head. Now Madam Duval's eyes closed as she instructed everyone to join hands, which they dutifully did. Very dramatically Madam Duval emitted a ghostly sigh as her head flew back and her mouth fell open.

Minna squeezed Alice's hand. Alice's eyes never left the medium's face. Madam Duval was making strange noises but none of them sounded like Rita. They sounded more to Alice like screechy hinges badly in need of oiling. The unpleasant noises continued and Alice,

knowing her sister Rita, was positive if there was an afterlife, Rita was off somewhere having a matinee of her own with some good-looking young man.

And then a voice came from Monica Duval's mouth that made Alice's blood freeze.

"I'm sorry about tonight, honey."

Charlie!

Had Minna recognized it too? Is that why her nails were digging into Alice's palm, although Alice felt no pain?

"I'm sorry, sweetie, but it's off. I can't make dinner." Alice stared at the medium. She had to be in a genuine trance. Her body was unnaturally rigid, almost as though she had died and rigor mortis had set in. "I love you, Alice. I only loved you, Alice. I . . ."—and then Monica Duval's body went into a convulsion. Her hands flew up, her eyes opened, she lurched to her feet, and from her mouth came what Alice and Minna would always remember as a hideous ungodly screeching such as no mortal could ever have uttered.

The lights went on and Madam Duval's assistant hurried to her side. Monica Duval collapsed into her arms and with the help of one of the men the medium was led to a sofa. They stretched her out and after a moment she seemed to have fallen into a sleep deep enough to be mistaken for a coma.

Her assistant said to the clients, "You must go. Madam is not well. She hasn't been well for some time now. She shouldn't be working. Please go. I will look after her."

Minna grabbed Alice's hand and started to hurry her out of the room when the dumpy woman stepped in front of them and said to Alice, "Was that your husband?" Her eyes were like bright kindling, her voice was drenched with anxiety. "Was that your dead husband?"

"My husband is *not* dead," Alice informed her and then her hand flew to her mouth.

"What's wrong?" whispered Minna sounding like the Ghost of Christmas Past.

"Oh, my God, Minna, come home with me! Come home with me!"

"Why? What is it?"

"Hurry, Minna, hurry!"

In the taxi going uptown Minna held tightly to Alice's hand. Alice wouldn't speak. She kept shaking her head and biting her lip, and Minna was worried that the séance might have brought on a nervous breakdown. Life with Charlie was always a strain and maybe the séance was the straw that broke Alice's back. Now what the hell

was Charlie doing at the séance, Minna wondered. I mean it was Rita whom Madam Duval was trying to contact—how did Charlie get into the act? Do mediums contact the living too?

The taxi pulled up in front of Alice's apartment building on East End Avenue. Alice had a five-dollar bill ready and thrust it at the driver. She and Minna hurried into the building, into the elevator, and up to the penthouse apartment.

The police were already there.

Detective Jack Becker explained that a neighbor had seen the front door to the apartment ajar, thought it strange, and entered the apartment to investigate. The neighbor, a Mr. Alfred Wayne, a retired chiropodist, found Charlie lying face down on the divan. Protruding from his back was a pair of ornamental shears that usually lay on Charlie's desk. The shears had penetrated his heart. Death must have been instantaneous.

"Clap hands," whispered Alice, and Detective Becker, startled, looked at the freshly minted widow with suspicion.

"What did you say?"

Alice repeated, "Clap hands," then added, "there goes Charlie." She turned to Detective Becker. "It's something my late sister said to me on my wedding day. Detective Becker, I think I can name my husband's murderer."

Scattered on the floor was the manuscript that Charlie Carruthers had been working on that morning. Alice knelt to gather up the pages. Detective Becker spoke to her sharply, "Please don't touch those. We haven't dusted them yet for fingerprints."

Alice got to her feet and crossed to console Minna who stood by a window sobbing. She had really liked Charlie. Alice was glad Minna had taken her to the séance. She was glad Monica Duval had phoned Minna to invite her and to be sure to bring Alice with her. That proved premeditation, as Alice explained it all to Detective Becker who at first was skeptical and then found chills going up his spine when Alice told him about Charlie's voice coming from Monica Duval's mouth.

"I have a feeling Charlie knew Monica Duval intended to kill him. I think she tried to kill him last night but did not succeed. And I think the murder was still so fresh in Monica's mind that instead of invoking the spirit of my sister Rita, she brought in poor Charlie instead. You see, Mr. Becker, those pages scattered on the floor are from a manuscript about life after death written by Monica Duval who has been having an affair with my husband." Minna kept bob-

bing her head up and down in agreement. "It's a terrible piece of trash, but now that she's murdered my poor Charlie, it will sell millions in hardcover and paperback, and then there are serializations and foreign editions, and it'll make a hell of a television series."

Detective Becker phoned his precinct to have them bring in Monica Duval. He seemed to be hearing some startling news from the precinct. "Are you sure it's the same woman?" Alice and Minna exchanged glances and then moved nearer to the detective. "Okay, if that's what her mother told you, we've got to take it for gospel." Was Duval's assistant her mother?

"Monica Duval confessed killing your husband to her mother shortly before she died."

"She's dead?" gasped Alice. "But . . . what happened?"

"Her mother said she thought she was having a fit. It's as though someone was choking her to death. But she managed to say she'd killed your husband, then collapsed and died."

"Oh, God, oh, God," said Alice.

"It's just too terrible," said Minna.

"It's worse than you think," said Alice. "Because if there's an afterlife, oh, God, Minna, if there's an afterlife then they're together!"

DETECTIVERSE

BAD CALL

by *GEOFFREY H. JEWETT*

The young beauty who stood by my side
Was convinced that someone had lied.
Her uncle was dead
From twelve shots to the head
And the coroner said, "Suicide."

© 1982 by Geoffrey H. Jewett.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY NEWSLETTER

CRIME BEAT

by R. E. PORTER

EARLY LOCKED ROOMS: In my December 3rd column I asked if Eugene Chavette's *La chambre du crime* (Paris, 1875), published seventeen years before Zangwill's *The Big Bow Mystery*, might be the first true locked-room novel. A firm answer is difficult because the book has never been translated into English, but locked-room expert Robert Adey writes from England that he believes Chavette was the first to use a locked room as the main plot device in a mystery novel.

Adey also mentions two earlier novels, *Nena Sahib* by "Sir John Retcliffe" (Germany, 1858) and the Gothic classic *Uncle Silas* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (London, 1864), but he points out that in each of these books the locked-room device is only a secondary plot element. Further comments from readers are invited—especially from anyone who might have read the Chavette novel in French.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER: Readers of Sue Grafton's new novel "*A*" *Is for Alibi* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, \$12.95), which introduces female private eye Kinsey Mill-

hone, may have noticed the book's dedication to the author's father, Chip Grafton, who died earlier this year. He was better known to mystery fans as C. W. Grafton, author of *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (1950), a suspense novel highly praised by Barzun & Taylor, and two private-eye novels, *The Rat Began To Gnaw the Rope* (1943) and *The Rope Began To Hang the Butcher* (1944).

NORWEGIAN MYSTERIES: Phyllis White, whom many of us have had the pleasure of meeting at the annual Bouchercons dedicated to the memory of her late husband, writes to clarify a statement in my May column to the effect that none of Norwegian writer Sven Elvestad's mysteries have been published in English. None have appeared here under his "Stein Riverton" pseudonym, but Mrs. White points out that Knopf did indeed publish *The Case of Robert Robertson* under Elvestad's own name in 1930. And I've since discovered that two other Elvestad mysteries appeared in England in 1924.

NEW JERSEY MURDERS:

Fact-crime readers should know about a new publication of the New Jersey Historical Society, *Murder Did Pay*, a reprinting of four Nineteenth Century pamphlets dealing with celebrated New Jersey murders. The hardcover volume includes an Introduction by John T. Cunningham and an especially valuable bibliographic essay by Donald A. Sinclair covering books and pamphlets about forty-two New Jersey murders from 1692 to 1901. It's available at \$12.95 from the Publications Department, New Jersey Historical Society, 230 Broadway, Newark, NJ 07104.

BELFAST CRIME: Rowan Tree Press (124 Chestnut Street, Boston, MA 02108) has published the second in its series of Periwig Mysteries, a reprint of F. L. Green's 1947 novel of crime and pursuit in Belfast, *Odd Man Out*, basis for the fine James Mason film of the same title. It's still one of the best suspense novels to be set against the background of the conflict in Northern Ireland, and the tragedy is that so little has changed since the book was first published thirty-five years ago. This new trade paperback edition is priced at \$5.95.

MICHAEL INNES: Readers like myself who regret the absence of Michael Innes from the short-story field in recent years can take heart from the publication of *The Bridge at Arta and Other Stories* by J. I. M. Stewart (Norton, \$14.95), a collection of six mainstream stories written by Innes under his real

name. The crime element is minor or nonexistent in these tales, but they're told with the suspense one expects from any good storyteller.

FIRST NOVEL: Ernest Savage, a writer familiar to readers of *EQMM* and *AHMM*, has just published his first suspense novel. *Two If By Sea* (Scribners, \$12.95).

COMING ATTRACTIONS: September's Fall-Winter issue of *Ellery Queen's Anthology*, titled *Ellery Queen's Book of First Appearances* in its simultaneous hardcover edition (Dial Press, \$12.95), is very special indeed. It's a collection of twenty-seven "first" stories from nearly 600 published to date in *EQMM*, and includes the initial efforts of James Yaffe, Lillian de la Torre, Harry Kemelman, Jack Finney, Stanley Ellin, William Link & Richard Levinson, Robert L. Fish, Jon L. Breen, Francis M. Nevins, Jr., David Morrell, Joyce Harrington, S. S. Rafferty, Jean Darling, and James Powell among others.

Robert J. Randisi, founder of the Private Eye Writers of America, introduces a new private eye of his own, Miles Jacoby, in *Eye in the Ring*, due in November from Avon Books.

Coming from Raven House this fall are new novels by two of our favorite writers: *Touch of Death* by Mark Sadler (Dennis Lynds) and *The Mourning After* by Harold Q. Masur.

Mario Puzo has completed work on his long-awaited "prequel" to *The Godfather*.

BLOODY VISIONS

by CHRIS STEINBRUNNER

Winnowing out the year's best mystery fare on television takes vigilance; crime selections have not always been prime cut. Recently the Mystery Writers of America presented their Edgar Allan Poe Award to both the best mystery telefeature and the best mystery series episode for 1981—and crime writers judging crime writing certainly makes for the best kind of criticism.

Among the made-for-TV motion-picture nominees was CBS's *A Small Killing*, an appealing suspense drama with two attractive stars, Edward Asner and Jean Simmons, playing an undercover cop and a woman college professor who team to investigate the murder of an elderly shopping-bag lady (Sylvia Sidney). The killing was not without motive—the old woman, it appears, was making deliveries for drug dealers—and Simmons, a sociologist who had befriended her, agrees to pose as a skid-row derelict to trap the murderer.

The screenplay was by Burt Preltzsky. Also in the running was *Mickey Spillane's Margin for Murder*, written by Calvin Clements, Jr., from Spillane characters, with Kevin Dobson as a relentless Mike Hammer once more avenging the death of an old army buddy. Although some of Mike's dialogue had a familiar ring—the villains are a consortium of politicians wor-

thy of his rage—the action in the CBS telefilm was gritty and fast-moving, with Velda, Mike's invaluable helper (Cindy Pickett), making a particularly vibrant contribution. (The year seemed encouraging to the return of the private eye: Robert Blake appeared in two TV movies featuring investigator Joe Dancer, in stories with Chandler influences.)

The clear winner, however, was Sam H. Rolfe's twisting, ingenious script for *Killjoy* (also CBS), in which murder and the disappearance of a girl draw the staff of a large city hospital into a tightening circle of suspicion. Craven doctors, a venal cop, a scheming mother, and a quirky pathologist are among the not too pleasant characters we meet, and the morgue scenes are quite unsettling. The skillful plot soon has us doubting everyone, much as in Christianna Brand's *Green for Danger*, another hospital mystery *Killjoy* somewhat resembles in atmosphere and nervous suspense.

Nominations for the series Edgar included a *Quincy* episode, "Stain of Guilt," written by Sam Egan, in which the venerable medical examiner (NBC-TV's television coroner since 1976), while acting as technical advisor for a movie about a famous murder, begins to suspect the killing could never have been committed by the woman

sent to prison for it. Another nominee was the sprightly new CBS series about two brash brothers who are private detectives, *Simon and Simon*. The episode by Philip DeGuere is called, amusingly, "Simon Eyes."

The Edgar, however, was given to a police drama which has gathered quite a bit of critical acclaim this past year, *Hill Street Blues*. Series creators Steven Bochco and Michael Kozoll present us with a realistic precinct house teeming with incident. In the winning premiere episode, two armed juveniles take hostages during a liquor-store holdup while elsewhere two policemen are seriously wounded trying to mediate a family squabble—law enforcement in a changing neighborhood where, as in life, the drama is never pat.

A special MWA award was presented to the Home Box Office payable production of the William Gillette play, *Sherlock Holmes*, as staged at the Williamstown Theater Festival. Hopefully, more at-

tention will be paid to mysteries in the growing cable industry.

All the finalists were excellent in the Edgar competition for best theatrical feature. The superb *Body Heat* and *Prince of the City* have both been praised in previous columns. *Eye of the Needle*, scripted by Stanley Mann from Ken Follett's novel, was a tense wartime thriller about a master spy and a desperate woman who become lovers and adversaries on a remote Channel island. Chosen as top mystery movie, though, was *Cutter's Way* (first released as *Cutter and Bone*), written by Jeffrey Alan Fiskin from a book by Newton Thornberg, about two Vietnam veterans, one physically disabled, who return to the States to a tangled personal relationship and stumble upon murder. A grim and complex mystery film which was almost buried in distribution, *Cutter's Way* was—happily enough—not neglected by the nation's most distinguished mystery award.

© 1982 by Chris Steinbrunner.

INTERVIEW: JANWILLEM VAN DE WETERING (2)

This is the conclusion of an interview that began in the previous issue.

EQMN: You studied Zen for over a year at a monastery in Kyoto. Are you religious?

DE WETERING: The only religion that ever impressed me is

Buddhism and Buddhism isn't a religion but a method suggested by a prince who liked sitting under trees. Yet I have never called myself a Buddhist and have now also given up the group effort that Buddhism recommends in certain cases. A man lives alone, and faces

the mystery alone. He may, because he has become neurotic or because life becomes too much for him, prefer to live on a rock for a while, clinging to other monkeys holding onto the same rock, but if he has a sense of humor and any strength left, he should strike out on his own, and stay on his own, for better or for worse.

EQMN: What angers you?

DE WETERING: Myself. My lack of insight of what it is all about is most annoying. I always think I should know, and I sometimes think I probably do know, but I never can find quite the right answers.

Others, I prefer to assume, don't anger me. The Nazis did during the war but now that they don't march up and down the road in front of my house any more I tend to forget them. Others are quite unmanageable anyway—it's a waste of time to try and interfere with them. If they insist on coming my way I do my best to be polite, and some are really very nice and interesting and it's a pleasure to see them and hear from them. Maybe all the others are that way too and it just takes a little time to get used to their ways. But how much time is there?

EQMN: How did you and your beautiful wife Juanita meet?

DE WETERING: I was working in Colombia, South America, as a manager of an import agency—chemicals from the U.S. mostly—when the Dutch community made contact with me. Having left Holland to get away from it I thought I should stay away, so I refused to go to the Queen's Birth-

day Party. Feeling guilty, I then phoned whoever had phoned me and volunteered for chores and spent hours arranging flowers, all of them orange. (The Queen's surname is Orange.) Exhausted, I hung around for the party and was saved by Juanita, then seventeen years old, who couldn't find anyone young enough to dance with her, and having left her spectacles at home. I was twenty-nine. The next morning I visited her mother to ask for her hand. Her mother phoned Juanita at the airport where she was working as a ground stewardess. Juanita couldn't remember my name but said she would marry me. We married a year later.

I wouldn't recommend marriage to anyone but enjoy it myself and Juanita says she does too. It took a while to get to that point. I wouldn't recommend fatherhood either but I'm always jealous of men who have lots of kids. I only have one myself and she is grown up now. It is only now that I begin to have an inkling of what fatherhood should mean. It speaks for my daughter's character that she still accepts my company.

EQMN: Being a linguist must help you a good deal in your writing, in your travels, and in business.

DE WETERING: I'm not a linguist. I speak Dutch because it came naturally and English because I have some affinity with the language, but my French is bad and my Spanish and German are worse. Japanese I have mostly forgotten. Americans tend to call bilingual or more linguists "linguists" but

Americans usually have no need to learn anything but American and are easily impressed sometimes.

EQMN: What is your idea of enjoyment?

DE WETERING: Wandering about my acreage and watching the river and the sky. Also the various objects—freestanding sculptures—I've been putting together the last few years. Driving around with my wife, following the shore. Looking at books I've read and enjoyed. Leafing through stamp albums.

EQMN: You're good at cooking, aren't you?

DE WETERING: Cooking is fun and very much part of the game of life. It's wonderful to be able to wander around a kitchen, think of a simple meal—I can't make a non-simple meal—and then actually make it. Every part of the exercise is fun. Cutting the vegetables, watching the water bubble, smelling, organizing movements. Setting the table, doing the dishes. But I would hate it if I didn't have

someone to cook for. Juanita is a much better cook. It is also fun not to have to cook but just to sit down and feast one's eyes and then get to it.

Drinking is great too. The first drink (bourbon), the second okay, the third. After that it's usually slosh and blah. Physical and mental hangovers. The pits of hell. Yet not to drink must be worse. The beauty of getting older, in my case anyway, is that the need to drink is less. As a younger man I had terrific urges to become drunk and I don't know whether I should be sorry now about all the revelry. It seems to me that much of my inspiration comes from the recesses of my deeper mind that were once opened by alcohol.

EQMN: What would you most like to share with the rest of the world?

DE WETERING: My books. May they sell millions of copies. And maybe my sculptures one day, although right now I need them to look at.

THE JURY BOX

by JON L. BREEN

The modular detective novel—that is, the type in which several unrelated cases are investigated in one narrative—has mostly been confined to the police procedural school, notably in the novels of J. J. Marric (John Creasey), Dell Shannon (Elizabeth Linington), and sometimes Ed

McBain. Some non-procedural writers have experimented with the type, however, notably Dick Francis in *Whip Hand* and George C. Chesbro in *An Affair of Sorcerers*. I am not a particular fan of the modular school. I think sticking with one case is the best idea more times than not. But perversely

enough, I found a multi-case entry in the "Nameless" private-eye saga one of the best books in the series.

**** Bill Pronzini: *Scattershot*, St. Martin's, \$10.95. The novel recycles (or cannibalizes, in Raymond Chandler's term) three very good Pronzini short stories, unified by an impossible-crime angle: "A Killing in Xanadu" (privately published, 1980), "A Nice Easy Job" (*EQMM*, November 1979), and "Thin Air" (*AHMM*, May 1979). Even if you read the tales in their original form, the continuation of Nameless's romance with Kerry Wade (first met in *Hoodwink*) provides plenty of suspense.

*** Collin Wilcox: *Stalking Horse*, Random House, \$10.50. Another San Francisco writer (coincidentally the dedicatee of *Scattershot*) is also in good form in a solid, fast-moving procedural—non-modular type—about Lt. Frank Hastings, who seems less a loner and more a team man than he used to be. The complicated plot, involving anonymous threats to an ailing U.S. Senator, never sacrifices clarity.

*** Emma Lathen: *Green Grow the Dollars*, Simon and Schuster, \$13.50. The Lathen team are up to par in this tale of the fight for a miracle tomato called Numero Uno. Funny chapter titles (beginning with "Prepare Plot Thoroughly"), interesting background on the seed-and-produce business, light comedic style, and a well concealed but credible killer. Only thing to grumble about is overpopulation, with nearly a score of main characters to keep track of, and that's not counting John Putnam Thatcher

and the Sloan Guaranty Trust regulars.

*** William X. Kienzle: *Assault with Intent*, Andrews and McMeel, \$9.95. Kienzle, whose style, satiric outlook, construction, and large casts suggest the influence of Lathen, always offers plenty to grumble about, principally self-indulgence and comic-strip unreality. The present case for Father Robert Koesler, his fourth, offers such trenchant commentary on the present-day Catholic Church, so many good clerical jokes and anecdotes, and so much pure fun as to disarm any ill-humored complaining. I continue to think Kienzle is the most overestimated (and overhyped) new mystery writer of recent years, but he is improving.

** Linda J. Barnes: *Blood Will Have Blood*, Avon, \$2.25. Backstage pranks, such as the substitution of an actor's flask of Bloody Marys with real blood, menace a Boston production of *Dracula*, and actor-sleuth Michael Spraggue is asked to investigate. This is a standard theatrical mystery, complete with nervous references to "the Scottish play," diverting enough without being precisely dazzling.

** Hillary Waugh: *The Doria Rafe Case*, Raven House, \$2.25. The second case for private-eye Simon Kaye is better than his first but still not prime Waugh. The characters are sharply divided into good and evil in this tale of a protection racket. There are some effective scenes but some clichés, too (such as calling the master crook "Mr. Big").

** Ron Goulart, *Upside Downside*, DAW, \$2.25. Like many of Goulart's novels, this is almost an equal mixture of mystery, science fiction, and satire. It has an ample supply of the funny names, lines, situations, and ideas that make the author's work enjoyable even when it doesn't quite jell. Zack Tourney of the Federal Police Agency, infected with a slow-acting virus due to kill him in a few months, must try to solve his own murder.

Readers who relish mystery-s.f. hybrids will enjoy several of the stories in *The Best of Randall Garrett* (Pocket Books, \$2.95), especially "A Little Intelligence"—written with Robert Silverberg, also the volume's editor—featuring a brilliant clue to the killer's identity and one that could only exist in a science-fictional context.

Amanda Cross's 1967 novel *The James Joyce Murder* (Dutton, \$10.25), reissued to commemorate the Joyce centenary, will appeal to fans of detective Kate Fansler who missed it the first time around. Cross (a.k.a. Carolyn Heilbrun) has gotten better since, however.

All the characters seem to speak the same arch, mannered, quotation-strewn dialogue, which can be sparkingly witty or merely exasperating.

Too much literary chitchat follows the crime, and the distressingly obvious Least Suspected Person gimmick was used much more effectively by the late Ngaio Marsh thirty or more years before. In fairness to Cross, she throws in a Marsh reference midway, perhaps in acknowledgment of the appropriated idea. The novel has a very amusing ending.

Two detective novels of classic stature are available in new paperback editions: Helen Eustis's *The Horizontal Man* (Penguin, \$3.95), a 1946 Edgar-winner almost universally regarded as one of the great academic mysteries and one of the best psychological novels of its psychology-obsessed decade, and Christianna Brand's *Tour de Force* (Harper Perennial, \$2.50), a 1954 Inspector Cockrill case that shows Brand, though less prolific than the Queen-Christie-Carr triumverate, can equal them for virtuoso puzzle-spinning.

© 1982 by Jon L. Breen.

"Q"

From Ellery Queen . . . an offer so good

...it's frightening!



Meet some of the world's most fiendish characters. Match wits with brilliant super-sleuths. The coupon below is your ticket to one **FREE** preview issue (without obligation) of **ELLERY QUEEN**: the world's leading mystery magazine. Follow the master suspense-builders as they construct intricate plots with startling conclusions! Stanley Ellin, Hugh Pentecost, Patricia Moyes, George Baxt, Julian Symons, Michael Gilbert, and Edward D. Hoch are regular contributors to **ELLERY QUEEN** . . . and there are interviews, book and movie reviews, and news from the mystery world. Send **NOW** for 12 issues of **ELLERY QUEEN** plus your **FREE PREVIEW ISSUE** for just \$12.97 (that's a total of 13 issues).

☐ Send me my Bonus preview issue plus 12 additional issues (that's a total of 13 issues) for only \$12.97. That's a savings of \$6.53 off the \$19.50 newsstand price.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

\$12.97 PAYMENT ENCLOSED: ☐ BILL ME: ☐

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN

SEND TO:
ELLERY QUEEN
BOX 1930
MARION, OHIO 43305

Outside USA and Possessions add \$1.75
(GUARANTEE: Cancel at any time and receive a refund for all unmailed issues.) (For immediate ordering call **TOLL-FREE 1-800-247-2160**)
(In Iowa 1-800-362-2860)

LICENSED TO UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a **NEW** short story by

MARGARET YORKE

Margaret Yorke's first eleven novels were family-problem novels—"but," she said, "I was always tempted to stir up their quiet plots with some violent action." With Dead in the Morning (1970), she did just that and in the little more than a decade since, her contribution to crime fiction has been considerable and noteworthy. We are in editor's heaven to be publishing her for the first time in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.

"You played a footfault," Phyllis Burton had accused Eleanor long years ago, and later, umpiring a junior tennis match, she had given several footfaults against Eleanor in a manner that seemed unjust at the time and did so still . . .

FAIR AND SQUARE

by **MARGARET YORKE**

Mrs. Ford stepped aboard the *S.S. Sphinx*, treading carefully along the ridged gangplank, her stick before her. It would be unfortunate if she were to stumble and injure herself before her holiday had properly begun.

Her holiday.

Mrs. Ford had developed the custom of avoiding some bleak winter weeks by going abroad. While ostensibly seeking the sun, she sought to give her family some relief from having to be concerned for her. She tried hard not to be a burden to her middle-aged sons and daughters and their spouses.

She had been cruising before. She had also stayed in large impersonal hotels in the Algarve and Majorca, where it was possible to spend long winter weeks at low cost, enduring a sense of isolation

© 1982, by Margaret Yorke.

among uncongenial fellow weather refugees. On her cruise, Mrs. Ford knew she could expect near insolence from certain stewards because she was a woman traveling alone. With luck, this would be counterbalanced by extra thoughtfulness from others because of her age.

Her cabin steward would be an important person in her life, and she had learned to tip in advance as a guarantee of service and her morning tea on time. There would be patient tolerance from couples who were her children's contemporaries; they would wait while she negotiated stairways and would help her in and out of buses on sightseeing excursions ashore. Older passengers in pairs would be too near her in age and too fragile themselves to spare her time or energy, and the wives would see her as an alarming portent of their own future.

There would be plenty of older spinster ladies in cheerful groups or intimately paired. Eleanor Ford would not want to join any such coterie.

The best times would be if the sun shone while the ship was at sea. Then, in a sheltered corner, she would read or do her tapestry while others played bridge or bingo or went to keep-fit classes. She would have her hair done once a week or so, which would help to pass the time. She hoped she had brought enough minor medications to last the voyage. The ship's shop would certainly sell travel souvenirs and duty-free scents and watches but might be short on tissues, indigestion remedies, and such.

Each night Mrs. Ford would wash her underthings and stockings and hang them near the air-conditioning to dry by morning. For bigger garments she would be obliged to use the laundry service. She would go on most of the shore excursions, though they tired her and she had been to all the ports before, because to stay on board would be to mean she had abandoned all initiative. She would send postcards to her smaller grandchildren and write letters to her sons and daughters.

She would long for home and her warm flat with all her possessions round her and her dull routine—yet this morning she had been pleased, leaving it in driving sleet, at the prospect of escaping to the sun. Most people would envy her, she told herself, wondering which of her fellow-passengers, who had looked so drab waiting at the airport, would, by the whim of the head steward, be her table companions throughout the cruise. She had requested the second sitting and been assured by the shipping office that this wish would be

granted—otherwise what did you do in the evening after an early meal? As it was, Mrs. Ford would be able to go to bed almost at once when dinner was over with a book from the ship's library, which was likely to be one of the best features of the vessel.

Her cabin was amidships, the steadiest place in bad weather, and not below the dance-floor, where she might hear the band, nor the swimming pool, where the water might splosh to and fro noisily if the ship rolled. She had been able to control these points when booking. What she could do nothing about was her neighbors. They might be rowdy, reeling in at all hours from the discotheque, or waking early and chattering audibly about their operations or their love lives—Mrs. Ford had overheard some amazing stories on other voyages.

As she unpacked, she thought briefly about Roger, her husband, who had died six years ago. He had been gentle and kind, and she had been lucky in her long life with him. He had left her well provided for, so that even now, with inflation what it was, she could live in modest comfort and put aside enough funds for such an annual trip. She had so nearly not married Roger, for it was Michael whom she had really loved, so long ago. Setting Roger's photograph on her dressing-table, she tried to picture Michael, but it was difficult. She seldom thought of him after all this time.

That night climbing into her high narrow bunk, she had a little weep. It was like the first night away at school, she thought, when you didn't yet know the other pupils or your way around. It would all be better in a day or two.

In the morning she had breakfast in her cabin. The ship had sailed at midnight, and beyond the window the sun shone on a gently rolling sea. Mrs. Ford had taken a sleeping pill the night before, and so she felt rather heavy-headed, but her spirits lifted. She would find a place on deck in the sun.

On the way, she stopped at the library and selected several thrillers and a life of Lord Wavell, which should be interesting. She found a vacant chair on a wide part of the promenade deck and settled down, wrapped in her warm coat. After a while, in the sunlight, she slept.

The voice woke her.

"You're not playing properly," it charged. "Those aren't the right rules."

Mrs. Ford's heart thumped and she sat upright in her chair, car-

ried back by the sound to when she was twelve years old. She was playing hopscotch with Mary Hopkins, and Phyllis Burton had come to loom over them threateningly—large, confident, and two years older, disturbing their game.

"This is how *we* play," came the present-day response, in a male voice, from the deck quoit player now being challenged on the wide deck near Mrs. Ford's chair.

"They're not the right rules," the voice that was so like Phyllis's insisted. "Look, this is how you should throw."

Long years ago Mrs. Ford's tennis racket had been seized from her grasp and a scorching service delivered by Phyllis Burton. "You played a footfault," she had accused—and later, umpiring a junior match, she had given several footfaults against Eleanor Luton, as Mrs. Ford was then, in a manner that seemed unjust at the time and did so still. All through Mrs. Ford's schooldays, Phyllis Burton's large presence had loomed and intervened, interfered and patronized, mocked and derided.

She was good at everything, but though she was older she was in the same form as Mrs. Ford. She wasn't a dunce, however—it was Eleanor who was a swot, younger than everyone else in her form. In the library she was unmolested; her head in a book, she could escape the pressures of community life she found hard to endure. Eleanor was no joiner, and neither was she a leader—it was Phyllis who became, in time, head girl.

There came the sound of a quoit, thudding.

Mrs. Ford opened her eyes and saw large buttocks before her, shrouded in navy linen, as their owner stooped to throw.

"We enjoy how we play," said a female voice, but uncertainly.

"Things should always be done the right way," said the owner of the navy-blue buttocks, straightening up.

In memory, young Eleanor in her new VAD uniform stooped over a hospital bed to pull at a wrinkled sheet and make her patient feel easier. Phyllis, with two years' experience, told her to strip the bed and make it up over again, although this meant moving the wounded man and causing him pain.

"But the patient—"

"He'll be much more comfortable in the end, it's for his own good," Phyllis had said. And stood there while it was done, not helping, although two could make a bed much more easily than one.

Phyllis had contrived that Eleanor was kept busy with bedpans

and scrubbing floors after that, until more junior nurses arrived and she had to be permitted to undertake other tasks.

Michael had been a patient in the hospital. He'd had a flesh wound in the thigh and was young and shocked by what he had seen and suffered in the trenches. He and Eleanor had gone for walks together as he grew stronger. When he cast away his crutches, he took her arm for support—and still held it when he could walk alone. They strolled in the nearby woods, and had tea in the local town. Phyllis saw them once and told Eleanor so, and soon after that Eleanor was switched to night duty so that she scarcely saw Michael again before he went back to the front. She didn't receive a single letter from him, and after months of waiting, although she never saw his name on the casualty lists, she decided he had been killed.

Later she met Roger, who was large and kind and protected her from the harshest aspects of life for so many years, leaving her all the more ill prepared to battle alone, as now she must.

"Games are no fun unless you play fair and square," said the sturdy woman with Phyllis's voice.

Mrs. Ford looked away from her and saw a thin girl in white pants and a red sweater and a young man in an arran pullover and clean new jeans—the deck quoit players. The older woman was leaving, walking away, but the damage was done.

"Come on, Iris, your turn," said the man.

"No, I don't want to play any more," the girl said.

That had happened long ago too. Eleanor had not wanted to play games after Phyllis Burton's derisive interventions.

There was some murmuring between the two. The man put his arm round Iris's shoulders but she flung it off and, head down, mooched off along the deck, disappearing eventually round the corner. The man watched her go, then moved to the rail and leaned over it, gazing at the water.

Mrs. Ford was trembling. The woman was so like Phyllis, whom she hadn't heard of since "their" war, so long ago. Strange that someone else should waken her memory. Phyllis, if she were still alive, must be well over eighty now—eighty-four, in fact—and this woman was what? Getting on for sixty? It was hard to tell these days.

Mrs. Ford found it difficult to settle back down after that, and spent a restless day.

Proper table allocations, not prepared the night before when seat-

ing had been informal as passengers arrived, had now been made, and Mrs. Ford was pleasantly surprised to find that she was at the doctor's table, with two couples past retirement age and a younger pair. The doctor was also young, reminding Mrs. Ford of her eldest grandson, who was thirty-five. She didn't know that her elder son, that grandson's father, now chairman of a group of companies, had personally visited the shipping office to request special attention for his mother, particularly a congenial place for meals. He and his wife had been on a cruise the year before—their first—and had seen for themselves what Mrs. Ford's fate could be. Her children all loved their timid mother and respected her desire to maintain her independence—and, far from relaxing about her when she went away, they worried. On a ship, however, there was constant attention at hand, a doctor immediately available, and swift communication in an emergency.

Mrs. Ford felt happy sitting next to the doctor, waiting for her soup. She would eat three courses merely, waiting while others ate their way through the menu like schoolboys on a binge. The doctor told her he was having a year at sea before moving, in a few months' time, into general practice. It was a chance to see the world, he said.

He was a tall blond young man with an easy manner and he liked old ladies, who were often valiant, building walls of reserve around themselves as a defense against pity. Mrs. Ford, he saw, was one like that. There were others who thought great age allowed them license to be rude, and took it, and the doctor liked them too for he admired their spirit. He ordered wine for the whole table and Mrs. Ford saw the other three men nod in agreement; they would all take their turn to buy it and so must she. This had happened to her before and it was always difficult to insist, as she must if she intended to accept their hospitality. She liked a glass of wine.

Phyllis Burton, if she were a widow, would have no difficulty in dealing with such a problem. She would, early on, establish ascendancy over the whole table.

After all these years, here was Phyllis Burton in her mind, and just because of the dogmatic woman on the deck this morning.

Conversation flowed. The doctor asked about Mrs. Ford's family and listened with apparent interest to her account of her grandchildren's prowess in various activities. It was acceptable to brag of their accomplishments, but not of one's children's successes, Mrs. Ford had learned. Everyone disclosed where they lived and if they had cruised before—or, failing that, what other countries they had

visited. Both retired couples had been to the Far East, the younger pair to Florida. The doctor revealed that he was unmarried, but his face briefly clouded—then he went on to describe the ship making black smoke off Mykonos (such a white island!) due to some engine maintenance requirement. He laughed. It had looked bad from the boats taking the passengers ashore.

Mrs. Ford had enjoyed her meal. The passenger list was in her cabin when she returned after dinner but she didn't look at it. She read about Lord Wavell, falling asleep over him and waking later with her spectacles still on. Then, with the light out and herself neatly tucked under the bedclothes, she dreamed about Michael. They were walking in the woods near the hospital, holding hands, and he kissed her sweetly, as he had so long ago, her first kiss from an adult male, right-seeming, making it easy when afterwards Roger came along.

She woke in the morning a little disturbed by the dream, but rested.

The next night the captain held his welcoming party, and at it Mrs. Ford, hovering on the animated fringe of guests, saw the doctor talking to a pretty girl in a flame-colored dress. She saw them together again in Athens, setting off to climb the Acropolis.

Mrs. Ford decided not to attempt the ascent—she had been up there with Roger on a night of the full moon and preferred to hold that memory rather than one of a heated scramble that would exhaust her. She waited in a tourist pavilion by the bus park, drinking coffee, till the groups from the ship returned. This time the doctor was alone. With her far-sighted eyes, Mrs. Ford peered about for the girl but did not see her.

Then she heard the voice again.

"What a clumsy girl you are. I don't know why you can't look where you're going," it said, in Phyllis's tones. "Look at your trousers—they're ruined. Scrambling about like a child up there!"

"I'm sorry, Mummy." Mrs. Ford heard the tight high-pitched reply of someone in a state of tension. "I slipped. It will wash out."

Mrs. Ford, on her way to coach number four, glanced round. The tourists wouldn't pause for coffee—meals were paid for on the tour and they were returning to the ship for lunch before taking other excursions before the *Sphinx* sailed that night. Behind her she saw a tall, well built woman with carefully coiffed iron-grey hair in a tweed skirt, sensible shoes, and an expensive pigskin jacket. Beside

her was the girl Mrs. Ford had witnessed talking to the doctor, her blonde hair caught back in a slide at the nape of her neck. On her pale trousers there was a long, dirty smear.

It was to the mother, however, that Mrs. Ford's eyes were drawn. Just so might Phyllis Burton have looked in middle age.

That evening Mrs. Ford consulted the passenger list with a pencil, reading it with care to winnow out the mothers and daughters traveling together. The father might be present too, unobserved so far by Mrs. Ford. She marked several family groups with a question mark. There were no Burtons. Of course not. But the resemblance was so uncanny, she would have to find out who the woman was.

In the end it was easy.

The next day the sun shone brightly and the sea was calm. Mrs. Ford decided to climb higher in the ship than she had been hitherto and explore the sports deck in search of a quiet corner where she could sit in the sun. Stick hooked over her arm, a hand on the rail, she slowly ascended the companionway and walked along the deck to a spot where it widened out and some chairs were placed. In one sat the blonde girl. Beside her was an empty chair.

"Is this anyone's place?" Mrs. Ford inquired, and the girl, who had been gazing out to sea, turned with a slight start. A smile of great sweetness spread over her face and, confused, Mrs. Ford was again in a wood, long ago, with Michael.

"No—oh, please, let me help you," the girl said, and, springing up, she put a hand under Mrs. Ford's elbow to help her into the low chair. "They're difficult, aren't they? These chairs, I mean. Such a long way down."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Ford, gasping slightly. "But getting up is harder."

"I know. We found it with my grandfather," the girl said. "But now he's got his own chair for the garden—it's higher, and he can manage."

"Your grandfather?" Mrs. Ford wanted the girl to talk while she caught her breath.

"He's lived with us since my grandmother died—before I was born," said the girl. "He's still quite spry, but a bit forgetful. He's a lamb."

"And are you like him?" She was, Mrs. Ford knew.

The girl laughed.

"Forgetful, you mean?" she said. "Maybe I am—Mummy always

says I'm so clumsy and careless. But then, she's so terribly well organized herself; Granny was the same, Grandpa says. She always knew what to do and made instant decisions."

Roger had always known what to do and made quick, if not instant, decisions, Mrs. Ford reflected. "I dither a bit myself," she declared. "I miss my husband a great deal. He cared for me so."

"That must have been wonderful," said the girl, seeming quite unembarrassed by this confidence.

They sat there in the sunshine, gently chatting. The girl's mother was having her hair done, she said. They were cruising together—her mother had had severe bronchitis during the winter and it had seemed a good idea to seek the sun. Her father couldn't get away and so she had come instead. What girl would refuse a chance like this? Her mother had a great desire to see the Pyramids and that would be the high point of the trip for them.

"But you've traveled before?" Mrs. Ford asked. Her elder grandchildren, this child's generation, were always whizzing about the globe.

Mummy hadn't liked her going off just with friends, the girl said, but she *had* been to France to learn the language. There had been family holidays in Corsica, which she loved. They rented a villa. She had two brothers, both older than herself.

"What are their names?" asked Mrs. Ford, still feeling her way. She didn't know the girl's yet.

"Michael's the eldest—he's called after my grandfather," said the girl. "The other one's William, after Daddy."

Mrs. Ford's gently beating old heart began to thump unevenly. Should she say she had known a Michael, long ago? But the girl was going on, needing no prompting.

"Aren't names funny?" she said. "I'm glad I wasn't called after Mummy—her name's Phyllis, after her mother. It would be confusing to have two Phyllis Carters, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose it would," Mrs. Ford agreed, and now bells seemed to be ringing in her head, for her Michael's surname had been Carter.

"I'm called after someone else Grandfather knew," said the girl. "It's quite romantic, really. There was this nurse he met in the war—the first war, you remember."

"Yes, my dear, I do," said Mrs. Ford.

"She was very young and shy and kept being ticked off by this older, bossier nurse, Grandfather said. When he went back to France

he wrote her lots of letters, but she never answered. Wasn't that sad? I'm named after her. Her name was Eleanor."

"Oh," said Mrs. Ford faintly, and her head spun. Letters?

"She must have married someone else or something," said the girl. "Or even died. All the letters were sent back to Grandfather. Mummy found them when she helped him clear up after Granny died, in her desk, locked up. She burned them without telling Grandfather. It would only have upset him."

"Yes, I suppose it would," said Mrs. Ford. There was just one fact that must be confirmed. "Your grandmother?" she asked.

"Grandfather married another nurse," said the girl. "Mummy's exactly like her, he says."

Mrs. Ford took it in. All those years ago Phyllis Burton had intercepted letters meant for her. Why? Because she wanted Michael for himself, or because she sought, as always, to despoil?

"And have you uncles and aunts?" she asked at last.

"No, there was only Mummy," the girl replied.

So Phyllis had managed just one child, and had died before this grandchild had been born, while Mrs. Ford, with two sons and two daughters, had survived into great age. And Michael had never forgotten, for this girl bore her name.

She could cope with no more today.

"What a nice little chat we've had," she said. "We'll be meeting again." She began to struggle up from her chair and the girl rose again to help her.

In the days that followed they talked more. Seeing them together, the mother would walk past, but if Eleanor was talking to any man among the passengers, or a ship's officer, the mother would break in upon them at once.

In Mrs. Ford's mind the generations grew confused and there were moments when she imagined it was this confident, domineering woman who had been so perfidious all those years ago, stealing letters meant for another, not this woman's long-dead mother. At night Mrs. Ford shed tears for the young girl that had been herself, waiting for letters that never came and in the end giving up.

But she'd had a long, full, and happy life afterwards. And Michael hadn't persevered—hadn't tried to find her after the war. Perhaps Phyllis had already made sure of him: she'd borne him just one child.

On deck, Mrs. Ford heard Eleanor being admonished.

"A ship's doctor won't do," came that dominant tone. "I've plans

for you, and they don't include this sort of thing at all. It stops the instant you leave the ship, do you hear?"

Eleanor told Mrs. Ford about it later.

"He's a widower. His wife died in a car crash when she was pregnant," she said. "But it isn't just that. Mummy wants me to marry an earl; if she can find one, or at least some sort of tycoon, like Daddy."

"It's early days. You don't really know each other," said Mrs. Ford.

"I know, but he's only doing a short spell in the ship, then he's going into general practice. We could get better acquainted then, couldn't we?"

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Ford.

"And as for earls and tycoons—" Eleanor put scorn in her voice.

She'd learned typing and done a Cordon Bleu cooking course, Eleanor said. She'd wanted to be a nurse but Mummy hadn't approved. The girl seemed docile and subdued—too much so, Mrs. Ford thought.

Michael Carter, she remembered, had seemed to have plenty of money, though neither had thought about things like that when during that long-ago war they took their quiet walks and had tea in a café. Phyllis Burton might have destroyed the innocent budding romance simply because that was her way, but she wouldn't have married Michael unless he had been what was called, in those days, "a catch." She'd have made sure of the same for her daughter—and that daughter was repeating the pattern now.

"You're of age," Mrs. Ford said. "Make your own decisions."

Later the mother spoke to her. It was eerie, hearing that voice from the past urging her, since she had become friendly with Eleanor, to warn her against the doctor.

"But why?" Mrs. Ford asked. "He seems such a nice young man."

"Think of her future," the girl's mother said. "She can do better than that."

"He'd look after her," Mrs. Ford said, and she knew that he would. The girl was timid and lacking in confidence; the doctor, experienced and quite a lot older, would make her feel safe, as she had felt with Roger. "It depends on what you think is important," she said, rather bravely for her, and Eleanor's mother soon left, quite annoyed.

Mrs. Ford smiled to herself and stitched on at her *gros point*. She'd help the young pair if she could. Nowadays, as she knew from her own family, people tried things out before making a proper com-

mitment, and though such a system had, in her view, disadvantages, there were also points in its favor.

Mrs. Ford did not go to Cairo. The drive was a long one from Alexandria, and she'd been before—stayed with Roger at Mena House, in fact, years ago. She spent the day quietly in Alexandria. The doctor, she knew, had gone on the trip in case a passenger fell ill, as might easily happen. That evening he said that someone had fainted, but nothing more serious had occurred.

The next day was spent at sea, giving people a chance to recover from the most tiring expedition of the voyage. Among those sleeping in chairs on deck, Mrs. Ford saw Eleanor's mother. Her mouth was a little agape and her spectacles were still on her nose. In her hand she held an open book. Perhaps she was not as robust as she seemed, Mrs. Ford mused—her own mother, after all, the Phyllis of Mrs. Ford's youth, had not survived late middle age.

On the upper deck, Eleanor and the doctor were playing deck tennis. Mrs. Ford, seeing them, smiled to herself as she walked away. Youth was resilient.

Several days later the *Sphinx* anchored off Nauplia. The weather was fine, though a haze hung over the distant mountains and there was snow on the highest peaks, rare for this area. Mrs. Ford stood in line to disembark by the ship's launches with the other passengers going ashore. Stalwart ship's officers would easily help her aboard and she quite enjoyed feeling a firm grasp on her arm as she stepped over the gunwale into the boat.

A row of coaches waited on the quay. Mrs. Ford allowed herself to be directed into one. She would enjoy today, for while Mycenae, their first stop, was a dramatic, brooding place, holding an atmosphere redolent of tragedy, Epidaurus, in its perfect setting, was a total contrast. They drove past groves of orange trees laden with fruit. The almond trees were in bloom and the grass, which later in the year would be bleached by the heat of the sun, was a brilliant green.

The haze had lifted when the coach stopped at Epidaurus. Mrs. Ford debated whether to go straight to the stadium, which so few tours allowed time to visit and where it would be peaceful and cool, but in the end, walking among the pines and inhaling their scent, she decided to visit it again.

She walked past the group from her coach as, like docile children, they clustered around their guide and, sauntering on, using her

stick, she turned up the track to the left of the theater where the ascent was easier than up the steep steps.

At the top she turned to the right and entered the vast semicircle of stone. She moved inwards a little and sat down, gazing about her, sighing with pleasure. Below stood her group; she had plenty of time to rest and enjoy her surroundings.

The sun was quite strong now and she sat thinking of very little except her present contentment. A guide below began the acoustic demonstration, scrabbling his feet in the dust, jingling keys, lighting a match. Mrs. Ford had seen it all before. Then her eye caught a flash of bright blue lower down—young Eleanor's sweater. She was almost at the bottom of the auditorium and with her was a tall young man easily discerned by Mrs. Ford's far-sighted eyes to be the ship's doctor. They were absorbed as much with each other as with the scenery, Mrs. Ford thought as she watched them together.

Then a voice behind her called loudly.

"Eleanor!" she heard. "Eleanor! Come here at once!"

Mrs. Ford reacted instinctively to the sound of her name and she turned. Her pulse was beating fast and she felt her nerves tighten with fear. Since her youth no one had talked to her in such a tone.

Down the steep steps of the aisle between the seats, Phyllis's daughter, whose name was also Phyllis, came boldly towards her, striding with purpose. Phyllis the malevolent, Phyllis the destroyer. Mrs. Ford's grip on her stick, which was resting across her knees, tightened as the lumbering figure in its sensible skirt and expensive jacket approached. Her pace did not slacken as she drew near. Mrs. Ford knew with a part of her mind that it was not she but her young namesake below who was the target of the imperious summons.

She acted spontaneously. She slid her walking stick out across the aisle, handle foremost, as Phyllis drew level, and by chance, not deliberate design, the hooked end caught round the woman's leg. Mrs. Ford tightened her grasp with both hands and hung on, but the stick was pulled from her grip as the hurrying woman stumbled and fell.

She didn't fall far—she was too bulky and the stairway too narrow—but she came to rest some little way below Mrs. Ford and lay quite still. No one noticed at first, for there were shouts and cries filling the air from tourists testing the amplification of the theater and attention was focused below.

Mrs. Ford's pulse had begun to steady by the time people began to gather around the body. Her stick lay at the side of the aisle. She

retrieved it quite easily. She returned to her coach by the same way she had come, away from all the commotion, and was driven back to Nauplia where the ship waited at anchor.

There was talk in the coach.

"Some woman tripped and fell."

"It's dangerous. You'd think there'd be a rope."

"People should look where they're going."

"She must have been wearing unsuitable shoes."

The doctor was not at the table for dinner that night, and over the loudspeaker the captain announced that though sailing had been delayed this would not interfere with the rest of the timetable—the next port would be reached as planned.

Mrs. Ford's table companions related various versions of what had happened ashore to cause the delay. The woman, Eleanor's mother, had stumbled in the theater at Epidaurus and in falling had hit her head against a projecting stone, dying at once. Someone else thought she'd had a stroke or a heart attack and that this had caused her to fall, for she was a big woman and florid of face. The Greeks had taken over, since the accident had happened ashore, and the formalities were therefore their concern.

"Terrible for the daughter," someone remarked. "Such a shock."

"The father's flying out," someone else said.

Mrs. Ford ate her sole meunière. She had only wanted to stop Phyllis from interfering. Hadn't she?

Her son, meeting her at the airport some days later, found his mother looking well and rested. He knew about the accident—it had been reported in the newspapers.

"What a terrible thing to happen," he said. "It must have been most distressing. Poor woman."

"Well, she saw the Pyramids," Mrs. Ford replied.

What a heartless response, thought her son in surprise, and looked at his gentle mother, astonished.

"Q"

DEPARTMENT OF SECOND STORIES

Louis Weinstein's first story—"How I Became a Jeweler"—appeared in the March 24, 1982 issue of EQMM. It introduced Lou Mandel, a sharp kid fresh out of high school, who uncovers the thief in a jewelry shop. The shop owner is a friend of Lou's father, Phil (Old Thunderfoot), a private investigator. We suspect Lou is going to follow in his old man's footsteps—or, if this story is any indication, maybe it will be the other way around.

CLEAN SWEEP FOR LOU

by LOUIS WEINSTEIN

Overnight I went from a jeweler to a delicatessen sweep. Harry Lubin, my boss, was responsible, getting me together with his pinochle pal, Manny Glassman, owner of the Palace delicatessen on Broadmoor Parkway in Queens.

At their regular weekly game, Harry happened to brag to Manny about how his new jeweler, a kid fresh out of high school, caught Harry's ex-partner stealing gold from the business. Right away Manny wanted to know if he could borrow me. At the Palace something besides the meat was not kosher. Business was up, but profits were down, leaking away a little more each month for the last nine or ten months. Manny couldn't run down what was wrong. Maybe the kid would like to try.

"Just so you won't get sore at me," Harry told me, "let me make it clear what you're getting into. You'll come in as the sweep, the all-around schlepper, doing all the dirty work—mopping, clearing tables, dishwashing, cleaning up, even a little cooking."

"That's all?" I asked. "No windows?"

"That too. Anything, everything needs doing. Six days a week. A half-hour lunch. A sweat job. A lot of guff. No one lasts. I told Manny it was possible, but only under certain conditions. Number one, you

© 1982 by Louis Weinstein.

shouldn't be away over six weeks. Second, he pays what I pay. Third, no cut-rate fee—"

"Skip the rest," I cut him off. "Call him. Ask him when I start."

Harry called Manny. That night, Friday, Manny called me. We had a long talk. Early next morning I marched into the Palace. A typical New York deli. Frankfurters and knishes heating on a gas grill near the window. Mustard pot, sauerkraut, hot-dog rolls handy. Cash register near the door. Three tiny tables squeezed along the wall. Opposite the tables, a display case—bologna, salami, rolled beef, the works. Shelves stacked with beans. Pastrami and corned beef warming in steamers sending off a delicious aroma. Fifteen or twenty bigger tables in the rear dining area. Huge jars of pickles adding to the wonderful spicy smell. A few flies. A big, independent grey cat roaming. All very familiar.

"Lou Mandel!" Manny's face brightened as he greeted me. He was fairly tall, stout, wore glasses. He was standing behind the display case and wrestling a whole pastrami out of a small brown-cardboard box. He yelled as the swinging door into the main dining area swung open, "Ace, come here! This is our new boy, Lou Mandel—show him what to do!"

Ace was in his late twenties. Good height, slender but wiry-looking. Ample schnozz. Close-set eyes. Full lips. His thin face was muddy-looking, maybe because he needed a shave. Altogether nothing much to look at, this Ace Gottlieb, the rookie assistant manager who happened to be married to Manny's only child, Frieda. Frieda couldn't be much of a bargain herself was my guess, not if she picked Ace for her husband.

"So you're the next victim." Ace smiled cynically. "Go change your clothes and I'll get you started. Through the swinging door to the left, there's a big closet. In case you're bashful, don't like to show your gotkas, it locks from the inside."

I skipped the lock. Anyone wanting to admire my polka-dot shorts was welcome. The back room was a cluttered combination kitchen and storeroom. Sinks, counters, six-burner gas range, home-type refrigerator and dishwasher, kitchen equipment hanging from hooks, sacks of onions and potatoes, mops, pails, brooms, cartons of napkins. Soda. Beer. A big walk-in refrigerator filled the wall next to the back door. Trash cans lined with green-plastic bags everywhere.

Ace broke me in on the elementary drudgework. Mopping. Scouring pots. Scrubbing counters. As he found new jobs for me, Ace

chimed in with happy remarks like, "Lots of fun, hey? It's only the beginning."

Then he introduced me to the finer points. Lugging meat and cases of beverages out front from the walk-in. Making French fries cut so thick, oil so hot, fried four minutes. He promised other good things. I'd help on the dinner menu—peeling and cutting vegetables, cleaning up.

At ten o'clock, Ray Solarz, sandwich man and cook, came in, climbed into a white butcher's coat and reinforced Manny up front.

Ray looked like a linebacker—big shoulders, neck, and wrists. Sparse black hair, swarthy complexion. He was around fifty. He had his problems—among them a retarded twelve-year-old daughter, high blood-pressure, and a taste for whiskey.

Next I met Charley Levinson, a fixturer. A bachelor. Grey-streaked brown hair. A fast-moving fifty-five. He worked eleven to two-thirty, walked the short distance home, returned about five. He wore a black bow tie and a too-small waiter's jacket, both antiques. He spoke through a toothpick balanced at the corner of his mouth. He was a horse player; in a small way.

Paula Korn, lunch-only waitress, was pert and pretty. She had a good figure, short dark hair, blue eyes, nice white skin. Twenty-one or -two. A college student, winding up her accounting studies.

Lunch time was fairly busy. I piled dirty dishes on a rolling cart, swiped at the tables with a rag. Beer and soda cans, bread crusts, soiled napkins by the ton went into the trash bags. Before long, mustard, ketchup, grease, and sweat stains decorated my clothes. I kept my eyes open. I noticed Ace was attentive to Paula, putting on his best suave. This didn't seem to bother Manny.

For my lunch at two o'clock I had Ray make me a hefty pastrami sandwich. He handled the knife like a surgeon—zing, zing, zing—trimming fat and gristle and slicing just the right amount and thickness. He said, "What's a bright kid like you, a hustler, doing here? Eat hearty. You won't last."

I took the sandwich to a table on the side Paula worked. After eating, I spent the few remaining minutes of my lunch break outside the deli, just standing and watching. The Palace was between a busy drugstore and Farber's, a not-so-busy shoe store—a total of two men walked in, a third man walked out.

Back to work, I loaded the first batch of lunch dishes into the dishwasher and went looking for Ace. He was out back taking care of a meat delivery. I couldn't believe how narrow the driveway

was—barely wide enough for the small truck. One-way directional arrows were painted on the pavement. A chain-link fence separated the driveway from a narrow sidewalk. (Later, from Manny, I learned the reason for the cockeyed set-up. Widening the street, for a new bridge approach, gobbled up a good chunk of the original driveway.) Ace was taking boxes of different kinds of meat from the driver, checking them off on the invoice, and piling them on the floor just inside the deli.

"Ace—" I went up to him "—how much detergent do I use for a full load?"

"A couple of spoonfuls—read the directions on the box," he snapped. "You too dumb to figure it out for yourself?"

While I did the dishes, Ace stacked the boxes in the walk-in, shoving the old stuff forward to make room at the back of the shelves for the fresh stuff. Between loads of dishes I tidied up the dining area. Paula was finishing counting her tip money. Sucking at his toothpick, Charley watched me pushing broom.

"Slow down, kid," he said. "The boss isn't looking. You got all afternoon."

I gave him my best idiot smile and kept working.

About a quarter to three Manny handed Ray a key ring and said, "Your day for the trash today."

Ray took the keys, went out front, and got into Manny's old station wagon. "What's this with the trash?" I asked Manny.

"Nothing worth mentioning," Manny said. "You saw the back driveway. Regular private-sanitation trucks are too big to get in. The shopping center won't let us put the garbage out front, so we run the bags over to the Cooley Point dump board—about twenty-five minutes—and throw them directly into the garbage scows."

"Does Ray take the trash every day?"

"No. We split it up—sometimes Ray, sometimes me, Charley once in a while, but Ace most of the time. It all depends."

Ray returned a quarter after four, peppermint losing the fight with the whiskey on his breath. He went to work in the kitchen side by side with Ace at the big counter near the stove. They were both cutting up vegetables. I was peeling potatoes.

"Dammit, Ray, be careful with that knife," Ace barked.

"Just move over, you're crowding me," Ray said. "And quit ordering me around. You don't own the place yet. Manny's not dead."

"Shove over a little." Ace slashed at a carrot harder than he had

to. "And when you make the chopped liver, don't dump so much salt in—we've been getting complaints."

"Look who's telling me how to make chopped liver. I was making chopped liver when you were knee high to a matzo ball."

"Make it right then. I'm assistant manager, I'm running this kitchen. And I don't like you coming in here stinking of booze. That stuff may go over okay with Manny but not with me. So watch your step. You can be replaced."

Ray's face reddened. "You couldn't assistant manage your way out of a paper bag. If your father-in-law didn't have pity on you, you wouldn't even have a job here. He took you in—when was it? a year ago?—because you couldn't make a living anywhere else. Now all of a sudden you're a big-shot maven, an all-around expert."

Ace didn't answer. But I noticed Ray edge away from Ace. After that they worked in silence.

About a quarter to five, Bella Glassman, Manny's motherly-looking widow cousin, and blond, handsome Bert Fortgang, a law student on the job nine or ten months, came in. From both of them I caught the same kind of questioning look. Manny had told me to forget these two dinner workers for now. Later, if I had no results working days, he'd put me on nights, waiting table. I ducked into the closet to change clothes. While I was there Ace came in. First surprise, he had shaved. Next surprise, he started changing into real nice clothes. Suit, Quiana shirt, matching tie.

When I headed for the front door Manny was standing talking to a girl dressed to kill. Stylish print dress, pearl necklace. Long brown hair looking fresh out of the beauty parlor. Good-looking. Very sexy. Zoftig. Twenty-three or so.

"My daughter, Frieda," Manny introduced her, pride in his voice. "Frieda, meet Lou Mandel. He started here today."

Just then Ace came up and slipped his arm through hers. She mumbled something at me and the two of them went out the door. Watching them climb into a late-model Buick station wagon, I asked myself why a knockout like her hooked up with Ace. All duded up, he still looked more like a deuce than an ace.

Next day was Sunday. There were no deliveries and not much early-morning business. But from about noon on, there was a steady flow of customers—families with sloppy kids, a lot of take-out business. At three, Ace pulled his shiny station wagon around to the

driveway and didn't return. I caught Manny alone and asked, "Ace, is he some kind of athlete? Is that how he got the nickname?"

He chuckled. "Ace is for Asa, same way Manny is for Menasseh. Old-fashioned names right out of the Bible. Ace is a regular Gene Kelly, if that makes him an athlete. My Frieda and he like to dance, so they go out to discos a lot. That's why I let him leave early Saturdays and Sundays."

"How long have they been married?"

"About a year and a half. Why do you ask?"

"Just curious. Does she work?"

"Frieda work?" He gave a little laugh. "You don't know my Frieda. She got married so she shouldn't have to work. Frieda was never much for work."

"I suppose you gave them a nice healthy wedding present?"

"A little something," he said, smiling. "After all, she is my only daughter. I want she should be happy."

"If you don't mind my asking, how do they get along? Any problems? Money?"

"Fine, in all ways," he said. "They dance, go out, have the same interests. I don't interfere." He studied me. "You think Ace could be—?"

I shook my head. "I don't think anything yet. She's a very attractive girl. Ace is a very lucky fellow."

"Looks aren't everything," he reminded me.

I knew what he had to be thinking. Frieda was a Jewish American Princess. Spoiled. The best was none too good for her. Everything came to her gift-wrapped on a silver platter. Snow was supposed to melt beneath her feet, on command.

"Tell me about Ray's retarded kid," I asked. "How is she doing? It must cost him a bundle."

"A mint," Manny said. "He's devoted. Only the best doctors for her. But his wife has a good job—she's a dress designer—and I help a little."

Monday the Palace was closed. I did some thinking. I went out and bought a salami, different kinds of marking pens, and a small notebook. I experimented to see which kind of marker wrote easiest on the salami. My father, who is a private investigator, not only agreed to check something out for me later in the week but also took the time to drive me out to Cooley Point.

I inherited the morning jobs Ace had done my first day. Tuesday

through Friday he came in at one and stayed till he and Bert closed. I handled the meat delivery a little different than Ace. First, when I put the stuff in the walk-in, I marked each item with a 2, for Tuesday, the second day of the week. Wednesday would get a 3, Thursday a 4. Second, I began a daily inventory of what was on hand every morning, jotting the information in my pocket-size notebook. This way I could quickly pick up any discrepancies between the quantity of meat moving and the daily cash receipts.

Lunchtime was pandemonium, everyone yelling at once. A gang, eight strong and wearing coveralls lettered *SUPERIOR TOOL AND DIE* across the chest, swaggered in as if they'd just parked their wheels. They shoved two tables together in Charley's section, a noisy, beer-drinking young bunch. Hearty eaters, two sandwiches apiece and side dishes for most of them.

As the beer took hold, they got pretty rowdy with Paula, whistling and making off-color remarks. She tried to ignore them or brush them off with quips, but Charley egged them on. They cheered when he grabbed her, gave her a big hug, and leered, "Best thing on the menu, right, boys? Tender and delicious. The daily special. How lucky can I get? She wants me to be her bodyguard."

Two of the older members of the gang ate their lunch rather quietly, then put their heads together to study the morning tabloid's racing page. I managed to catch the drift of Charley's whispered conversations with some of his customers. These same customers, and the two quiet Superiors, left hefty tips. Five and ten dollars for a four- or five-dollar lunch? To an uncouth old goat? Implausible. But more plausible if Charley had a sideline booking bets.

When the lunch rush ended, Charley and Paula exchanged a few unpleasantries and before she left I asked her how she could stand him. Preferably on his head in six feet of muddy water, she said.

Returning from a delivery, I glanced inside the shoe store. There were no customers but Charley was standing near the back talking with stubby little Farber. I asked Manny about that.

"Farber's a friend. Charley stops in to chew the fat. No harm in that, is there?"

I wasn't so sure. Manny was so innocent in so many ways it was painful. Charley could be suffering from an acute case of horse player's disease—the money hurts.

During the midafternoon lull that day Manny ran the trash to Cooley Point.

The next day, Wednesday, I just happened to be clearing a table opposite the cash register when a young fellow, clutching his meal check and a five-dollar bill, eased up to Ray at the register. Ray rang something up. In the change he handed back I spotted a ten and a five. The customer poker-faced the fistful of money and hustled out.

"You muffed that one, Ray," I told him.

"How so?"

"He gave you a five."

"You must be kidding," Ray said. Then: "You spying on me?"

"I wasn't snooping, honest. But you gave him change for a twenty."

He shrugged. "If I made a mistake, it's no big deal. It'll show up in the day's receipts. Worse things happen here."

Next day he told me, "You were wrong, boychick. The money was right, just a few cents off. Next time don't be so quick to butt in."

I knew I wasn't wrong. I know a five from a twenty. With Ray's big fast hands it'd be easy as licking mustard off a finger to keep a bill hidden, fork out change without ringing anything up, and slip the bill into the butcher coat pocket. Skip some ring-ups, do a little mental arithmetic, and he'd make up the amount taken from the till. Nat Simon, the accountant who came in once a week, cared only about the register tapes jibing with the actual cash in the till.

Takeouts gave the light-fingered even more leeway. The amounts were supposed to be jotted down on a sheet kept near the register. Anyone so inclined could pocket the money and not jot. Was Ray holding out, getting what he thought was due him by some such trickery?

Nat Simon had been in that morning.

"It's worse than ever," Manny moaned. "Terrible. Here I am, working like a horse, the place jammed with customers, and Nat tells me I'm losing money. Where, Lou? How? Have you found out *anything*?"

"I'm making progress," I said. "Just give me a little more time." I felt sorry for him, a man his age busting his hump for nothing while some thieving help got fat. What Manny might need was a completely clean sweep.

A little later I was loading meat into the display case when I heard Ray saying angrily to Manny, "What am I, right off the street, I don't know how much meat goes in a sandwich? If you've got com-

plaints, get yourself another man. You think working here is any bargain?"

"Forget it," Manny tried to pacify him. "Don't be so touchy. I'm not dissatisfied with your work. You're the best sandwich man in the business, the fastest, the tops."

"So maybe you should show some appreciation, pay me what I'm worth and stop bothering me with complaints about using so much meat."

"Forget it," Manny walked away. "Case closed."

Outside, after lunch, I spotted my father ambling out toward his Ford relic in the parking lot. It was good to see Old Thunderfoot doing his thing.

Before leaving for home I locked the closet door and penciled numbers, very lightly and small, on the backs of Charley's and Paula's meal checks. I did the same with four or five pads.

That night my father reported, "Farber doesn't sell enough shoes to outfit half a harvest-ball couple. The store is a front—numbers, bookmaking, maybe both. Men only walk in, no women, and they come out empty-handed, the only shoes the ones on their feet."

"Bookmaking," I said. "That explains why Charley's in Farber's every day, putting in the bets he picks up at the Palace. The cash is left as tips. He pays off in phony loans. Make sure your camera's working. You'll need it."

On Thursday I nailed down another of Charley's cute tricks. I had Manny meet me in the walk-in after Charley and Paula left and Ace was out with the trash. I explained about numbering the checks. We lined up the Superiors' checks, which ran in numerical order. The total came to sixteen dollars under what my memory told me they'd ordered.

"There it is," I said. "Charley chops a couple of bucks off each check every day. They slip him maybe an extra dollar tip. Everyone is happy but you. You get the shaft. Another thing, Charley is picking up bets from some of these boys, and other customers too. Don't get upset. You don't have to worry about the police. Farber, maybe Charley, they'll want. But brace yourself for another shock. Ray might be beating you at the register."

I told him why I thought so.

"Ray," he said sadly. "Who can you trust these days?"

"Maybe no one, but I'm not a hundred percent certain about Ray. Something on his mind is eating him up. He thinks he got a raw

deal from you, thinks he, not Ace, should be assistant manager, maybe a partner."

"I'll have a talk with him. He should understand I've got to take care of Ace so he can do right by Frieda."

"No talks," I said. "Not yet. Wait till I have the rest of the story."

By the following Thursday morning I had the whole story. Manny was getting bled so many ways it was a wonder he didn't need a daily blood transfusion. It was time to move, I told him, and after lunch I stepped outside to check if my father was ready.

His jalopy was at the far end of the parking lot.

At three o'clock on the nose, Ace rounded up the last of the plastic bags, ending with the one from the walk-in. Manny, rearranging cans of beans on the shelves, gave me a nod. I followed him out into the driveway. Ace was struggling to manhandle the last obviously very heavy bag into the station wagon.

"Hold up a minute," Manny said as Ace was just about to get into the driver's seat. "We're missing a carving knife—we've looked high and low and can't find it. Could be it got thrown in the trash by mistake."

"What? Waste an hour going through all this stinking trash?" Ace said. "I've got to get back and get dinner ready. It's only a knife."

"A thirty-five-dollar knife maybe means nothing to you," Manny said, "but it does to me. Lou, start taking the bags out."

"For the love of Mike," Ace said, "you've got six extras hanging in the kitchen! You need a new knife that bad, I'll buy you a new knife out of my own pocket! Come on! Let me get going!"

"I want a knife out of the trash, not out of your pocket," Manny said. "Lou, do what I say."

Ace was behind the wheel. The motor was running. I hung back only because I don't entirely relish getting bounced out of a moving car.

"I'm going," Ace said. "We'll talk about it later." He pulled away.

We watched. The station wagon didn't get very far. Right on cue, my father's old Ford rounded the corner into the driveway and stopped, blocking the way.

Manny and I started moving in that direction. Ace was getting out, waving his arms angrily at my father to show him he was going the wrong way. My father shrugged. How was he to know? And could he help it if his car decided to quit?

When we got there, Ace turned to Manny. "What's the big idea? What are you two following me for?"

"The big idea," Manny said, looking old, his face pale, "is I'm looking for something, and you know what for." He turned to me. "Now take the bags out, Lou, one at a time. Phil," he said to my father, "tell him who you are."

"I'm a private investigator working for Mr. Glassman," my father told Ace, not giving him his name. "I've got some dandy photos of you handing the bag to Sam Goldberg—Goldberg's delicatessen in Canarsie—yesterday. He spilled the whole story to me this morning. A sweet deal for him, buying fifty percent of wholesale. But he's a sensible man, he's going to make good."

I hit pay dirt with the first bag, under empty boxes and wrappings: three boxes of pastramis, two of corned beef, whole salamis and bolognas, a cooked roast beef. Working alone in the back at night, Ace had no trouble setting up the next day's haul in the walk-in trash bag.

Once my inventory check established that meat in quantity couldn't be accounted for, I knew the only way it could be leaving the place was in the trash. Figuring out who was thieving it was easy: whoever took the trash the days the inventory was short. Ace met Goldberg along the road leading to the dump board, got paid a couple of hundred dollars in cash two or three times a week. I was nine-tenths onto Ace the minute I laid eyes on his and Frieda's fancy clothes and the expensive new car. He needed a hell of a lot more money to support their high living after Manny's wedding money petered out.

"Lou, take the meat back to the place," Manny told me. "You don't know anything, you hear? I'll handle the rest of this my way. Ace, take the trash to the dump, then come back and work like nothing happened. After you close, come over to the house. Bring Frieda. This concerns her too. Some of it is her fault."

"She didn't know," Ace said.

"I'm sure," Manny said, his face a study in conflicting feelings—anger, sadness, resignation, forgiveness. "Frieda knows from nothing."

How did it all come out?

Well, I finished out the week, saying I'd gotten a job as an apprentice jeweler. Manny mailed nice personal checks to my father and me. Nat Simon got the ax, for general carelessness and for

keeping mum on how sky-high the meat bills were running. Farber got caught by the cops. Manny forgave everyone and opened another place for Ace to run, giving him a chance to redeem himself and support Frieda royally if he hustled. Frieda went to work there as a waitress and helped pull in the customers with her looks.

Manny decided to expand the Palace and broke down the wall into Farber's store. He went into semiretirement, making Ray manager and giving him a whopper of a raise and a slice of the profits as sweeteners. Charley went honest and stopped all his shenanigans, including making passes at Paula. How would it look, the captain of waiters, making passes at the accountant?

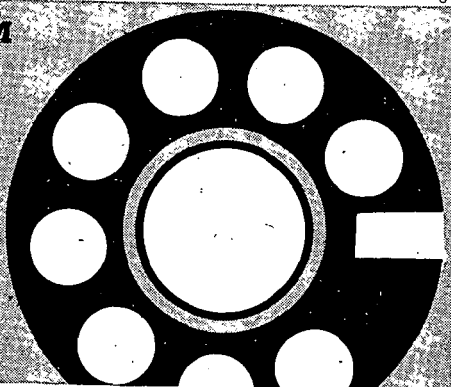
Every once in a while I drop over. Ray and I exchange funny grins, and I get a corned beef on rye on the house.

**SOLVE A GIFT PROBLEM
THE EASY WAY!**

You can't beat this for a great, money-saving idea. **ONLY \$12.97** will bring a friend or relative 13 packed issues of the magazine you're reading.)

Dial **TOLL-FREE 1-800-247-2160**
(in Iowa 1-800-362-2860)

L-TT11-5



a **NEW** short story by

FLORENCE V. MAYBERRY

The fascinating story of a woman in love, far from home, in Hong Kong where "there are many kinds of reality." She wanted desperately to know the truth, only the truth. "But who can know the truth before it happens?" Unless—"truth has already happened" . . .

WHERE ARE THE BIRDS?

by **FLORENCE V. MAYBERRY**

The shop lights on Nathan Road sparkled on an intricate tapestry woven of tourists, local shoppers, Chinese, Westerners—people of all kinds and moods. It seemed a world of humanity jammed into the tight confines of this Kowloon street, moving by ones, twos, threes, and larger family groups, each unit separate, each belonging to itself—tiny worlds within the larger world of the street.

Did I belong to myself? Or was I merely a husk, empty, the part of me that mattered belonging to no one?

I turned from Nathan Road into the narrower confines of Nanking Street and headed for the Night Market on Temple Street. On this street the separateness became less tangible, the individual units jammed into a single mass without space left over in which to indulge loneliness.

The sweet, musty smell of the Orient arising from the crowd and drifting from the tiny shops swept me back in memory to San Francisco's Chinatown. I visioned myself there again, standing beside a shop window displaying herbs and medicaments that I stared at but didn't see. Nils stood beside me and I asked him, "Will you come back?"

He said, "If I can."

"When?"

© 1982 by Florence V. Mayberry.

Hesitation. "That depends on my company. Stockholm to America's west coast is not my ship's regular run. I go with the ship."

He was First Officer on a Swedish freighter. I said, "Nils, couldn't you work for another company? Transfer to an American line?"

"No," he said. "I grew up with this line, I'm part of it, it's part of me."

Even before that final afternoon outside Chinatown's herbal shop we had been through this discussion. But now he added something he hadn't told me before. "Christine, I'll not be back. It wouldn't be fair to you. Because I'm married. I have three children. My oldest son has just entered university. I'm sorry, very sorry. You see, I never thought you would care this much."

Afterward I kept telling myself that of course he wouldn't believe I cared that much. *He's a man, a sailor wandering around the world. How could he understand that a woman of twenty-seven has never been in love before?* But this woman had been too constricted, first by shyness, later by devotion to study and to building a career to take time out for that. I was an accountant, a good one, and had built up my own small business. One of my accounts had introduced Nils to me. Nils, tall, blond, tanned, his blue eyes carrying within them the expression of a man who continually looks toward far horizons. Suddenly I realized that I was now established, secure, that I now had time for love, and here was the man I loved.

As Nils left me that afternoon in Chinatown, I kept staring into the window of the herbal shop, not watching him go for fear I would make a fool of myself. But fool I was nevertheless. I ran away, only a few weeks later, on a round-the-world trip, hoping that somewhere, somehow I could find him again. Perhaps in Hong Kong? Why not? It was a port.

Now, on this night in Kowloon, I kept moving with the crowd until I reached the beginning of the Night Market.

Small booths displaying merchandise lined the street in company with impromptu shops comprised of merchants squatting on the sidewalk, a few trinkets spread on a cloth beside them. It was an exotic scene, like a stage setting, the uneven tonal conversation in Chinese of merchants and customers seeming to form a musical background. One of the actors, a sidewalk entrepreneur, caught my skirt as I passed. "Preez, preez!" he urged, pointing to rough stone necklaces. "Nepali beads, nice, good!"

"Where is the man with the birds?" I asked. "I'm looking for the man who tells fortunes with birds. Where can I find him?"

He dropped my skirt, grabbed a necklace, shook it at me. "Nepal, very far. Cheap, good for lady."

"No beads. I want my fortune told. Where are the birds?"

He shook his head sadly. "Nepal," he repeated.

I went on, stopped at a booth where a woman sold children's clothing. "Can you tell me—where is the fortuneteller with the birds? The hotel said he is in the Night Market."

The woman beckoned to a Chinese man nearby, saying, "He Ingliss."

I explained again. "The hotel told me a man in the Night Market tells fortunes with birds. Do you know him?"

The man nodded and said, "Tonight not here. Maybe another street tonight."

"Which street?"

He shrugged, so I walked on, past other booths and squatting figures, past pots of steaming noodles and rice, diners standing around them deftly poking food into their mouths with chopsticks. The food smell made me dizzy. When had I last eaten? This morning? Or was it yesterday morning?

I reached another cross street and there, near the corner, was a man seated beside four tiny bamboo cages. I walked close and saw in each cage a small neat bird vested in yellow, a dark coat on its back, its beak long and thin, its eyes bright and alert behind the delicate bamboo bars. "I want my fortune told," I said.

"No Ingliss, no Ingliss!" the fortuneteller said.

We stared in impasse at each other. For some fanciful, confused reason, ever since I had heard of the birds at the hotel, I had my heart set on having my fortune told not by a man, but by a creature without whim or guile. Perhaps the intensity of my desire served as a magnet, for passersby stopped and gathered around us. There was a slight motion of the fortuneteller's hand and a small elderly man as bird-thin and bright-eyed as the creatures in the cages stepped out of the group. "You need interpreter? I speak English, good English. What you like to ask?"

"I want the birds to tell my fortune."

"A good fortune?" he asked cheerily, squinting as he looked closely into my face. "Yes, must be good, you need good fortune. Young ladies must not be sad."

"The truth. Only the truth. Whatever. Tell him to ask the birds for the truth."

He chuckled. "Too young foh sad. You, young, too sad. Me, old

man, very happy. You, me, all inside out, ha-ha! You need much rice, get fat, happy."

"You're not fat."

"Body, no. Heart yes, very fat, very happy." He leaned toward the fortuneteller, his voice singing up and down in Chinese, then turned to me. "Fortuneteller say first you pay. Fi' Hong Kong dollah. Birds tell good fortune."

I opened my purse and handed the bill to the squatting man. He picked up a small bundle of plain brown envelopes, shuffled them, fanned them out on a cloth before him. He whistled softly between his teeth, opened the nearest cage, rattled a tiny box of seed. A sleek little head peered out of the open cage. Then the bird hopped to the cloth and turned its head side to side to survey the crowd that had gathered to watch.

After a few moments the bird hopped back to the cage as though bored with the whole affair and cocked its head again at the renewed rattle of the seed box. At last it turned toward the envelopes, moved along their fanned-out line as though considering, then neatly picked up an envelope in its bill, held it toward the fortuneteller, accepted a reward of a seed, and re-entered its cage.

The fortuneteller opened the envelope, chattered to the interpreter, who said, "Bird say, sad time before your journey now going away. Soon everything happy. You wait, you see. Soon your dreams be real, happy."

Could it be true? Could it mean that Nils was even now sailing toward Hong Kong, that I would find him here?

But the fortuneteller was again shuffling his envelopes, including the one selected by the bird and into which was tucked the bill I had paid. Again the envelopes were fanned on the cloth. The fortuneteller opened the same cage, whistled, rattled the seed box. The little bird peered through its door, but scorned the blandishments of the seed box and hopped far back in its cage. The fortuneteller shut its door and opened the next cage in line. The new bird, a duplicate of the first, cautiously surveyed the crowd, put its bright eye on its owner, hesitated, turned back into the cage, refusing to take part in the game.

The bird in the third cage did the same and finally the fourth cage was opened. Perhaps this bird, being last in line, fourth choice, was greedier for seed. At any rate it hopped with alacrity to the envelopes, moved along their path, turned its head side to side like an

overzealous inspector of factory parts, and at last daintily plucked up an envelope.

When the envelope was opened, there was the bill I had earlier paid. "See!" cried the old interpreter, his voice triumphant. "Same fortune! Bird knows it is true. You will see. Dreams come true, much happiness waiting."

I tried to return his smile, wanting to believe, fearing to. Then I pressed another bill into the hand of the old interpreter and walked up the narrow, shadowy street, leaving behind me the little street vignette illumined by the soft glow of the fortuneteller's kerosene lantern.

Halfway to Nathan Road a voice behind me, soft but insistent, said, "It wasn't true. The fortune selected by the birds said other things." I whirled, faced a slim young Chinese a few steps behind me. He was unsmiling, his expression both serene and firm. "You said you wanted the truth. It wasn't the truth that you heard. That was why the first three birds refused to pick up the envelope to hear again the pleasant lies of the old man."

"But the fourth bird did," I insisted, as though what this stranger was saying was sensible and I was sane for listening to it.

"The fourth bird is new, still in training. It has not yet developed the sensitivity of the old birds. The fortuneteller read the truth, but the old man changed it. He always does that when he thinks the fortune will make the one it fits unhappy. He is devoted to happiness." He leaned forward, sharply surveying me. "Are you certain you want the truth?"

Who was he? Why did he follow me? What did he care what I believed or didn't believe? He repeated, "Are you certain you want the truth?"

"It's only a bird and some prepared fortunes."

"Then why were you so eager to find the birds? Didn't you believe? Or want to? Were you not in search of truth?"

My head began to spin again, and the Chinese and I became figures in a dreamworld in which impossible things are realities and that which we term realities become strange, out of tune with true existence. In that world this Chinese stranger was no stranger. It was only right that he knew all about me and could ask these things. His face floated toward me, then away. I finally asked, "What did the fortune really say?"

He motioned me beside him and began to walk slowly back toward the Night Market. "The blond man you love has left you. And now

you are traveling because he travels, hoping you will find him somewhere in the world." Rather severely, he added, "That is not very sensible."

I am insane, I have tipped the balance. Or is this stranger a clever confidence man? Why am I listening to him?

He said, "You are listening to me because you need help. You need to hear that what you grieve over is impossible. A waste of life. Life is too valuable to waste. The man is married. He will stay that way. You will not find him. That is what the fortune said."

I wheeled, running from him, past groups of Chinese who stared after the crazy foreigner. At the corner of Nathan Road I stopped, looked back. The Chinese had vanished, absorbed into the blur of booths and people.

I hurried to my hotel, fell into restless sleep. But when I wakened in the morning the first thing I thought of was that I must go back, must visit the birds again. Perhaps the Chinese stranger would return and tell me more.

I went into the office shop but the sight of food, the noise of clattering plates and of conversations made me queasy and I hurried back into the lobby, into the street, down to the harbor. The trip across the water from Kowloon to Victoria Island, the tram ride up Victoria Peak, the wandering around Hong Kong city—all of it was dull, half seen, merely something to pass time until night fell.

That evening once more I went looking for the birds. But when I reached the corner where the fortuneteller had been on the previous night, his space was occupied by a seller of necklaces and paper fans. "Where is the man with the birds?" I asked.

The little merchant smiled happily and held up a string of beads. I shook my head. "The birds! Where are the birds?" He dropped the beads, proffered two fans for my selection. I turned away with the merchant clacking Chinese despair after me.

I kept asking from booth to booth, "Where are the birds, where is the fortuneteller?" And at last I found him, near the end of the street, snuggled into a crevice between two buildings. A Western couple stood before him, laughing delightedly as the tiny bird held an envelope in its beak. Beside them was the old interpreter. I peered into the group gathered around them to see if the young Chinese was also there. He wasn't. I moved close to hear what the old man would translate.

"Good, much good!" he was saying, chuckling over this happiness

of fate. "You will have much beauty in your lives. Many excellent things. Bird say have many years, many children."

The young woman laughed; gave a mock groan, exclaimed, "Oh, no! Not yet, this is just our honeymoon."

"Wait, the birds will tell more!" the old man urged.

As on the previous night the act continued, this time the second bird selecting the original envelope. The girl clapped her hands, her husband tipped the old interpreter, and they moved on. I followed them up the side street toward Nathan Road, still hoping to find the strange young Chinese of the previous night. Then I stopped, fighting off the dizziness that seemed more and more to plague me. Where should I go? Should I go anywhere? Should I just sink out of existence, vanish, rid myself of the nuisance I had become?

As I debated I realized someone had joined me, was close beside me. I whirled to face the young Chinese.

"Why bother more with fortunetelling?" he asked. "I told you the truth yesterday. Truth does not change. But delusion is a kaleidoscope. It changes to fit one's hopes, and hope without truth is dangerous. Do you wish to return to childhood, to play games, to toss fate about like a many-colored ball? You are too old to be a child."

"I am not yet thirty."

"That is too old. Twenty is too old."

"But who can know the truth before it happens?"

"Truth has already happened," he said, his eyebrows raising as might a professor's while answering an obtuse student. "Your truth was written into you even before you were born into this world. It was engraved on your soul, along with various paths you might select in order to attain it. Some paths are long and tortuous, labyrinths to keep you turning and seeking. Others are short, direct. Do you wish the involved, or the direct?"

"The truth."

"Come," he said.

I followed him down to the Star Ferry at the harbor. We boarded the ferry and as it scudded across the murky water to the Hong Kong side, he directed me to the railing. He pointed to the water. Like a dark screen it reflected the colored lights surrounding the docks receding as we left Kowloon and expanding as we neared the opposite shore. "Look!" he ordered.

I stared at the water, leaning toward it as the lights coiled, slithered, sank away, returned, slithered, coiled. My gaze fixed on a dark

central point, a hollow of dark leading to nothingness. I tensed, longing to follow its path.

"No!" my companion exclaimed sharply. "That will not help. There is no end. You carry your troubles with you."

I gripped the railing with a tenacity belonging solely to body instinct for self-preservation, not to inner desire. My mind sank into the beckoning water, but my hands refused to loose their hold.

"There is no end," he repeated.

The ferry docked. Crowds swirled around me, swept me into their rush, and I was off the ferry, onto the Hong Kong dock. I looked behind me for the man, but he was lost in the crowd and I moved to one side, waiting for him.

Other crowds from other ferries, coming and going, arrived and left. I waited a long time, an hour, perhaps longer, but he never came. At last I returned to Kowloon, shivering as I passed the railing, seating myself far from it.

That night, back in my hotel room, I accepted the fact that I was mad. Insane.

I left the bedside light on, too fearful to be in the dark as I fell asleep. Sometime in the night I sat up straight, heart pounding, eyes staring. *The light*, I thought, *the light has awakened me*. Instead, it was Nils, sitting on the foot of my bed, gazing steadily at me. I gasped, struggling to breathe in a room that seemed sucked empty of air.

Then I realized what had happened. The Chinese stranger had sent Nils to me, to confirm what he had told me. "Who is he—this Chinese man?" I whispered.

Nils's lips curved into that slow smile I could never forget, enigmatic, calm, concealing things I would never know about him. No answer. Only the smile.

"He follows me, Nils. He warns me."

"Nils, he knows you. He told me about you."

"Is he real? Are you real, Nils? I'm going mad, aren't I?"

Only the smile.

The lack of air and his unresponsiveness turned me frantic. I threw back the sheet, sprang at him, grasping at him. I stood up, trembling, my hands clutching each other. Nils had vanished.

I was mad.

When morning came I was trembling, weak, worn out from sleeplessness. I knew I should try to eat something. When I opened my

door to go to the coffee shop, the Chinese stood beside it as though he had been patiently waiting for a long time.

"Go away!" I cried, and ran past him down the long empty corridor, stumbling, knees shaking. I pounded on the room boy's desk and he rushed out of the service room behind it.

"Help me! This man behind me is annoying me, he keeps following me!"

The boy peered past me. Then he came from behind the desk to look down the hall and at the elevators. He said, "No man here, Miss. He your room? I go look."

It was true. He was nowhere. To be seen, that is. Because he *was* there, I felt him everywhere, beside me, behind me, all around me, silently mouthing, *There is no end.*

I forgot about the coffee shop, returned to my room, sat on the side of my bed, and waited for him to knock at my door, or suddenly materialize before me. Mad though I was, I still could realize that this visioned man was not mad. Even, perhaps, he was wise. If he came again I would listen to him. I would ask, *Who are you? Why do you care what I do? But since you do, help me!*

I must have nodded asleep sitting up, for my watch showed that more than an hour had passed since I had earlier left the room. A sharp bird call had pierced my sleep. I stood up, and the sharp call muted into a gentle twitter. Could a bird have flown into the room through the window? Impossible, the window was fastened because of the air conditioning.

The twittering continued, soft and gentle like that of a sleepy bird in late twilight. I looked in the closet, in the bathroom to see if the bird was trapped there. I looked behind the drapes, listened beneath the air vent—perhaps the bird had flown into that.

Abruptly the Chinese was there, standing beside the long mirror into which I was staring with wide startled eyes. The bird sound ceased. I reached for his hand but he eluded me. "Please don't go away! Please help me!" Then I added quite matter-of-factly, "I am going mad."

"Yes," he agreed.

"Nils came here last night. Only he couldn't have. Neither can you. But you did, both of you. It can't be real, but it is. So I am mad."

"There are many kinds of reality," he said. "Come, let us go on the boat again."

We walked together down the corridor. As we passed the porter's

counter the room boy smiled and said, "No strange men in hall. All fine."

We entered the elevator, rode to the lobby, walked past the shopping arcade, out into the sunshine. The brightness pierced the darkness of my mind with a tiny shaft of exhilaration. I turned to speak to my companion. He was not there. Then I wondered—did he want me to go to the boat, or was the desire mine speaking through him? And was it the boat I sought, or the deep water beneath it?

Despite the noise of the street, I could detect the soft twitter of a bird just ahead. I hurried toward it. A taxi squawked, skidded around me. I moved in a haze of cars and people, following the bird, and found myself back at my hotel. As I entered the lobby I heard the whisper of my Chinese mentor, "Tonight we will go on the boat."

"Tonight," I promised.

In my room I fell onto the bed, but sleep would not come. I sat up, tense, waiting for the dark. "Nils!" I called several times, hoping he would come again. He didn't.

When it was dark I bathed, dressed, selecting a dress as dark as the night. If Nils should appear to me I wanted us to blend into the shadows, my madness undetected.

At last he came. The Chinese. Abruptly he was beside my chair, then moved aside for me to walk ahead of him. I took my purse, walked stiffly down the hall, feeling his gaze tighten the nerves at the back of my neck.

This time he guided me away from the ferry to one of the motorized junks which toured the harbor. I bought a ticket, went forward on the outer deck, refused the drink the steward offered. My Chinese companion settled beside me.

The junk edged past tiny sampan homes strung with washing, their cook fires glowing in braziers, children scrambling out of the filthy water for their suppers, other children stretching their hands toward our junk for coins to be tossed to them.

"I really wanted Nils to come, not you," I said ungraciously. "How long are you going to follow me?"

"Until the birds stop telling me to help you. You wanted the birds. Your fortune. They gave it to you, but you wouldn't listen. The birds will call until you listen."

"You aren't real," I said. "You aren't even here to anyone but me. So how can you help?"

"Are you certain that you understand reality? Everyone has

strange, unseen companions. Who can help. But only a few become aware of this."

"Why did I?"

He didn't answer, only gazed at Victoria Island as we rounded it, leaving behind us the distant brilliance of Kowloon and the nearer sparkling lights of Hong Kong. I stood up, moved against the railing, stared into the dapple of lights on the dark water. Against that black background the lights formed subtle pictures that shifted in and out, as on a turbulence-troubled television screen. Then the water steadied, revealing a picture of Nils, full figure, tall and blond. I could even see his slow, sleepy smile before he was swallowed up by a wave made by a passing boat.

I waited, breathless, and as the boat passed on, Nils returned in another shifting picture. This time I was with him. We were on a hill in San Francisco, beyond us the city lights ringing the Bay, encircling us, bringing us close together. Closer.

Slowly, smiling, Nils raised his hands, circled them about my neck. Up on deck, watching myself being strangled, I gasped, moaned, pulled back from the railing.

"Miss, you sick?" It was the deck boy. "Preez, you sit down maybe. I bring you Coca-Cola, yes?"

I sat down, nodded. When the drink came I grasped it with both hands. Even then the drink shook. "You could at least hold it for me," I said crossly to my Chinese nemesis.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said a startled, very British female voice. "I didn't realize—" The woman at the other end of the bench moved close, took the glass, and asked, "Are you ill? I'm so sorry. Please, I'll hold it."

"Thank you. I didn't mean for you to hold it, I thought—I'll be all right now."

She looked at me strangely. Why not? It isn't every night that you can ride on a boat with a crazy woman who has just watched herself being murdered.

The English woman moved away and I took her place near the center of the deck, away from the railing. It was not until the junk returned to Kowloon and I had left it to walk up the still busy night streets to my hotel that the Chinese returned.

"He will, you know," he said. "If you continue to let him."

"Will what?"

"Murder you. In front of a car, perhaps. Or too many sleeping

tablets. In the sea. Or even worse, murder your mind while your body lives on."

"No! He wouldn't! He was kind. I loved him."

"Love can be a lethal weapon. And since it is your love, not his, he will not even wield it himself. You will do it for him."

"I'm ill. I'm afraid."

"Go back to your own life. Go home. Stop searching."

At the hotel entrance he whispered urgently, "Call the house doctor. You are ill. You need help."

The lobby, its plants, divans, guests whirled about me as I swayed through its vortex to the porter's desk. "I'm ill," I said. "Call the doctor."

The doctor, a middle-aged Chinese, came, examined me, then spoke with gentle severity. "When did you last eat?"

I frowned, trying to remember. "Two—three days ago—I think."

"And sleep? Have you had trouble sleeping?"

"Sometimes. Sometimes I—I'm not sure, am I asleep or waking. Doctor, I'm afraid. I think I may be hallucinating. I see things that are not there."

"Do you take drugs?"

"No. Aspirin, sometimes. For headaches when I work too long. But not lately, on holiday. It's—it's something else. I see things. I'm afraid."

"You need sleep and food," he said. "I will have some broth sent up. Now. And mind you eat it. Then I will give you something to make you rest, sleep. Tomorrow I will see you again. And my advice is, return home. You are in no condition for a long, difficult journey."

I closed the door after him, locked it, slipped into bed, and turned out the light. As I sank into sleep, although the room was dark I could see that my Chinese friend—yes, I was certain now that he was my friend—had entered the room and was seated near the window. "Good night," I murmured.

"Goodbye," his voice echoed through the tunnel into which I was falling . . .

I awakened at a knock on my door, staggered sleepily to open it, and saw a waiter with a tray. "Doctor say you eat. All," he announced cheerily. "He come soon, look-see you eat. Very cross not eat all." I looked at my watch. It was twelve o'clock. Noon.

After the waiter left I obediently finished the poached-egg breakfast. Soon after there was another knock on the door. It was the doctor who studiously examined the breakfast tray. "You have done

well," he said. "This you must do each day. Three times a day you eat. And I will give you a note to a Chinese pharmacy: Chinese herbs are very good. They act slowly, but surely, and they will make you hungry and stronger. In addition there will be something for your nerves. You are physically run down, and for some reason your nerves have caused this. It is clear, every sign reveals this. Again, my advice is, shorten your journey. Go home to your family."

I thanked him, paid him. Why tell him that I didn't have a family? A few cousins living in distant cities, no personal family any more. When I met Nils I had hoped—but that was past.

I called the airline, made reservations for Bangkok, New Delhi, London, brief rest stops in each city, then back to San Francisco. Home and work. A fast trip without spare time to wander around ports looking for a tall blond man. Then I went out to find the Chinese pharmacy and the herbal cures. Back in the hotel I swallowed the medicines as directed. Napped. Awakened in the twilight.

I dressed, obediently went to the dining room and determinedly ate dinner. Just as determinedly I then set out on a task I had assigned to myself. I would try to find my Chinese friend. Tell him that even in my hallucinations he had aided me to escape from the miasma which had threatened to destroy me.

More brisk than I had been for days—no, for weeks—I set out on Nathan Road, down the side street to the Night Market. Now that I was almost normal I no longer believed my friend would just appear, through doors and walls—that was part of the past nightmare. The one I sought was strange, yes, but real.

This time I quickly found the fortuneteller, three women tourists beside him laughing and exclaiming over the little trained birds. I looked around for the young Chinese. He was not there and after a time I turned back to Nathan Road, peering fruitlessly into the clusters of people I passed.

Then, halfway to my hotel, there he was. We met, face to face. I held out my hand to stop him, saying, "Oh, I'm so glad, I've been looking for you. Because I'm going home. Tomorrow. I did as you said about the doctor. I'm so grateful to you."

His startled expression was overlaid with a façade of politeness. He bowed slightly and spoke to me in Chinese.

"But you are him—my friend! You have been helping me." I began to tremble, fearful that once again the miasma was arising within me. "You speak English—you've always spoken English to me. I only want to thank you."

He bowed again, his smile stiff. Again he answered in Chinese. Then he reached out to a passing man, his voice lifting and dropping in Chinese. The passerby bobbed his head to me, smiled, explained, "He say, you mistake. No Ingliss, maybe someone other."

"But—he looks exactly like my friend. Ask him if he has a twin brother. Explain—please ask him!"

They spoke back and forth and the passerby said, "Yes, he have twin. But brother not here. Brother die last year. He say maybe—" He laughed nervously. "He say, Americans say all Chinese look same each other. So you mistake. Sorry, thank you very much."

They nodded pleasantly to me, to each other, and went on their separate ways.

Everyone has strange companions . . . but only a few become aware of this. That was what my friend had said. Did the mind inhabit other worlds than this? Were, actually, all the many worlds simply part of one larger existence with ephemeral borders which could be traversed under stress? Did only the mad or near-mad slip through them?

I walked slowly back to the hotel, trying to think through my confusion. When I entered the lobby, I saw him standing by the elevator and hurried toward him. Vision, ghost, whatever, I could thank him.

He wasn't there.

Well, I told himself, I'll thank him the way he would advise, I will eat a second dinner, take my herbs, become strong and sensible.

As I turned into the coffee shop, distant, faint, fainter, then vanishing into a realm beyond the sounds of the crowded lobby, came the delicate twitter of birds.

A trick of the mind, of course.

Of course.

"Q"

Alex Semple and Hank Dressner were moonshiners. If Roche didn't get something on them soon and put them out of business, the county would have more Treasury agents nosing around than a runaway hound had ticks...

MATERIAL WITNESS

by ISAK ROMUN

I had this in common with Oscar Roche: we shared, with only mild distaste, the same first name. We easily got around this—I rarely called him anything but a respectful “Sheriff,” he called me Monahan.

What brought us together were two interactive facts: I was a newspaperman, Roche was frequently an object or source of news. As far back as I could recall events in Tuttey County, Roche seemed to figure in them. He came home from WW II early, shot up pretty badly in the legs. The county elected him sheriff in a wave of patriotism and reelected him after that in cold appraisal of his competence.

Tuttey County was my beat—one of my beats—in those early postwar years with *The Paulsburg Advance-Indicator*. Those were the days before I got my column. I was hungry for news. I had variable luck with Roche. Sometimes I got the makings of a good story; other times, my visits to Weaver's Lee, the county seat, were social and I drank more coffee than was good for me.

Roche scorned paperwork. So when I dropped in on him that morning I was surprised to see him behind an ancient manual typewriter pecking out a document of some sort. He was seated turned away from his desk belaboring the machine, which was on a small table with casters. I must have caught him in midthought because he either didn't notice me or deliberately ignored me.

Idly, I inventoried the items on his desk, an affair of cheap wood and chipping paint. Except for the intercom and the telephone, both with the shine of newness, everything on the desk looked as if it had been uncritically selected from a junkyard: mismatched In and Out

baskets; a bunch of dull pencils in a cracked coffee cup; a desk set with one pen missing and an exposed calendar page reflecting a date three days past; and a small tin box filled with paper clips, three bobby pins (two large, one small), and small golden safety pins.

My inventory over, I broke in on Roche. "Semple. Alex Semple. What have you got on him?"

The sheriff left off his typing and asked over his shoulder, "Why do you ask?"

"Well, he's outside, sitting by Jake Caudle's desk." Jake was Roche's chief deputy. "You must have Semple here for some reason. What do you expect to get out of him?" Semple was notorious for his close mouth.

Roche abandoned the typewriter and swung around so that he faced me across his desk. His grey eyes bore into my expectant blue ones. His hard blocky form pressed against the desk.

"Ever hear of the ant and the rubber plant? The little engine that could? The tortoise and the hare? There must be dozens of those little successes out there."

"And you want to be one of them," I said. "If at first you don't succeed and all that. Persistence, stick-to-itiveness. It's a philosophy that's worked before."

"I don't have a philosophy—I have a feeling."

"Tell me what it is so I can do an intelligent job of writing my story. If there is a story."

"There's a story, all right," Roche assured me. "I just don't know if it's today's story or tomorrow's story or next week's or even next year's. Do I know something? Semple out there is a shiner. He and Hank Dressner have lined up the family moonshiners hereabouts. None of them will say more than a frightened 'Howdy' to me nowadays. I know if I don't get something on Semple and Dressner soon and put them out of business, this county'll have more Treasury agents nosing 'round than a runaway hound has ticks."

I hadn't bothered taking out my notebook. "In other words, you don't have much."

"More ways than one to skin a tabby," he mumbled unconvincingly and pushed a button on the intercom. A voice I recognized as Jake Caudle's answered. "Wait five minutes," Roche ordered, "then send in Semple."

He turned back to me. "Monahan, instead of talking so much, you want to listen for a while and maybe see some first-rate police work?"

"Maybe?" I caught the one word that gave him an out.

"No promises, just maybe. Well?" I answered by taking out my notebook and holding a pen at the ready. "Okay, then, you just go over to that dark corner—" he waved indefinitely at some point beyond my right shoulder "—and just sit quiet. I mean that, the chair squeaks."

I did as I was told. Roche went back to the typewriter.

At the end of the five minutes, the door opened and Jake Caudle pushed Alex Semple into the room. Then Caudle left, closing the door behind him.

One thing you could say for Alex Semple: he *looked* like a low criminal. Stubble-faced, shifty-eyed, wet-lipped—his tongue, a pulpy pointed spear, kept darting from his mouth, dabbing at his lips, then quivering back behind his teeth. Nervous, shaking, a spirit seized in a palsied body. Bent over, really cringing, in a kind of postural depression, his whole aspect told you he would collapse at the tone of authority. But if you believed this you would have fallen into the trap of expectancy he set for the unwary. Beyond the superb play-acting, he was whitleather tough. He purposely wore the diminished man to put potential victims and ambitious lawmen off guard, to leave them with the conviction that they could handle this bag of broken humanity.

Roche motioned him to a chair. Semple scuttled over to it and sat on its edge, looking tense with anticipation.

"You can stop that right now, Alex," Roche said firmly. "Ain't right for old acquaintances to play games with each other."

Semple relaxed some. He sat back in the chair. "You got no right to bring me in, Sheriff."

"Jake *bring* you? I told him to invite you. A couple of good citizens wanting to do what's right, wanting to talk with each other."

"I don't want to talk."

"How about just making some X's then?" Semple looked puzzled as Roche fished a pencil from the cup and opened a desk drawer and pulled out a map. I recognized it as a tract map of the county. "Take the pencil, Alex, and put some X's on the map, that's all. One X for each still set up back there in the woods."

"Don't know about no stills. I got a call coming."

"A call, Alex, right in the middle of our friendly talk? You're not here on any charges. You're my guest. Relax and write. That's all, write me some X's." Roche shoved the map toward Semple.

Semple shoved it back. "*Don't know nothing about stills!*" he said through slitted lips which were now remarkably dry.

"Someone does, Alex. Lot of good men have been worked over in those woods, one so bad he died. Little men, small shiners, but big on principles. Didn't want to be a part of that giggle-soup empire a couple of fellows are building back there. *Someone* knows about those stills and those beatings. And someday someone's going to tell me."

"Nobody's going to tell nobody about them stills."

"Ho, Alex, a little slip there. Thought you didn't know about any stills."

Then the intercom buzzed. Roche pushed a button. It was Jake Caudle.

"Hey, Sheriff, what's this note you wrote to Helen? To buzz you when she came on duty."

"Wait out there," Roche snapped. "You and Helen."

Roche moved around his desk and went to the door. He beckoned me through and I went out into the administrative and dispatch area. With me out of the way, he talked back into his office.

"I'll be right back, Alex, and we'll talk a little more. Use the phone if you want, but all calls go through Helen's switchboard out here. If you want to go, you'll have to come through this door. The windows are barred and the yard door is locked with a double-key deadbolt. Why don't you just sit easy? I'll be back in a minute. Sit easy and think."

He closed the door of his office and strode over to the alcove of Helen Lutson, switchboard operator and dispatcher. Jake Caudle stood nearby.

Helen was young, perkily good-looking. A recent high school graduate, she traveled to Paulsburg College three nights a week to earn credits toward a degree. She was thinking about going into law enforcement and took Sheriff Roche very seriously.

"Helen," Roche asked, "you taking any English courses up at that college you're going to?"

"No, sir. Maybe next semester or next year. I'm only taking six credits this semester."

Roche rubbed his chin. He looked comically studious. "The missus is thinking about taking a writing course. They have a good one up there?"

"I don't know, Sheriff. I can get a catalog and bring it to you."

"Do that," Roche said, looking down at the dispatcher. "Say, how about a cup of coffee? Get one for friend Monahan too."

When Helen rounded the alcove wall, Jake Caudle asked, "You wanted me for something, Sheriff?"

"Oh, yeah. Have you got Route 460 covered? People have been talking to me about drag races on the straightaway parts."

"Yes, sir. We have two cars patrolling it from opposite ends. They haven't seen anything."

"I see. Well, tell them to keep their eyes open."

"Sure." Caudle nodded at Roche's office door. "I know it's going bad in there."

"Hardly started," Roche replied. He, too, looked toward the door. "We'll see when we get back."

Helen returned with the coffee. As we drank it, the sheriff stood next to the switchboard and talked of trifles. After emptying his cup, he looked again—forlornly, I thought—at his office door.

"Best get back to him. Come on, Monahan, bring your coffee if you're not finished."

In the sheriff's office, Semple was standing uneasily by the desk. Roche gave him a long, piercing, studied glare. Then, possibly unsatisfied with what he saw, his face folded back in resignation and he motioned toward the door.

"You can go, Alex." But the moonshiner didn't move.

"Something?" Roche asked.

"Those beatings. They were none of my doing."

"You upset the whole plan of salvation in Tuttey County, Semple, and you expect me to believe you're pure and unsullied."

"I'm not that, but I don't lean on people neither. Not that hard-down way."

"Can you prove that, Semple? You know what I mean."

Semple became cagey. "Who scratches my back?"

"I can't make promises."

"Then I got to see someone who can."

Roche fell into his chair behind the desk. He looked defeated, and I wondered why. He seemed about to continue his work at the typewriter but, instead, swung into the desk. His arms fell over the desk top and covered the county map. Roche and Semple stared at each other, the same look of uncertainty in the eyes of both.

"I can get you to that someone," Roche said finally. "But first I have to have something to prove your good faith, something that'll bind you not to change your mind when the questions start. Not much, Semple, just a little something."

Semple glanced at the desk top. Roche looked down and took his arms slowly off the map. On it were quite a number of penciled X's—each one, I knew, designating the location of an illegal still. Semple had done the sort of writing Roche wanted. The sheriff looked up at Semple.

"Sign it, Alex," he said. "Wait. Write 'To Sheriff's Department, Tuttey County' down first and sign below it. Put the date under your name."

Semple did so, and Roche quickly folded the map and returned it to the desk drawer from which it had come.

"All right, Alex, I'll have to hold you. Material witness. Put you in a cell. Put a guard on you. That's for your own good. Your protection."

"Okay."

Roche operated the intercom and Jake Caudle's voice again came out of the box.

"Come in here and get Alex and lock him up," Roche instructed. "And watch him. Who's got the office duty tonight?" Caudle gave him two names.

"Okay, good men. Have one of them park outside the cell. I want someone on Alex all the time."

After Jake took Semple away, Roche cupped his face in his hands. He seemed exhausted.

"Looks like it's over," I said.

"No, it's not," Roche countered, taking his hands off his face. "Lot of planning goes into an operation of this size. Monahan, I'm going to ask you to hold off on your story. I'll contact you when we're ready to move."

That was disappointing. I had expected immediate action. Instead, it looked as if it would be a day or so before anything happened. I stood up to go.

Roche stood up too. As he did, he bumped up against the wheeled typewriter table. It rolled a foot or two away. He looked at the typewriter, tore out the paper, crumpled it, and threw it in the wastebasket. Forgetting the intercom, he shouted at his closed office door, "Helen, come in and get this thing out of here! I'm a lawman, not a clerk!"

No one came. His voice mustn't have gone past the door. He waited a moment, fidgeting, then pushed the typewriter, table and all, out of the office . . .

As Roche had requested, I sat on the story. I sat on it for exactly one day. Then I went looking for it.

What moved me in the direction of Weaver's Lee next day was a report I received that Alex Semple was out of jail and back in the woods. There was no news of raids upon stills or of the county prosecutor putting together a case, just that Semple was free and operating again. I had a lot of questions for Roche. I hoped he had answers.

As it developed, he didn't—at first. He responded to my queries by talking rather aimlessly about the events of the previous day. Keeping a rein on my Irish temper, I interrupted his musing. "Why did you let Semple go? Who or what got to you?"

"I'm going to make believe I didn't sense the intent of that second question, Monahan." He leaned back in his chair. "I've thought and thought about the events of yesterday, trying to piece together the little things, the things you forget, if you ever notice them at all. Jake and Semple went out before me, then I rolled that typewriter out of here. Only you, Monahan, were left in this office. So you must have it. I looked for it later, but couldn't find it. You took it out of here yesterday. It answers your first question. Maybe it answers your second."

I tried to look neither surprised nor indignant. "You said yesterday you didn't have a philosophy, you had a feeling." I waited a bit before going on. "Maybe you had more than a feeling, maybe you had a plan—a good plan. Good Lord, Sheriff, why didn't you follow through?"

I expected an answer. I didn't get one.

I reached into an inside pocket of my suitcoat and brought out the piece of paper. I had smoothed it out but it still showed a network of wrinkles. I held it up between two fingers.

"This what you were looking for?" I asked.

"That's it."

I unfolded the paper, read the brief typed text. It was an unfinished letter to the county board of supervisors asking for funds to pay a willing informant, one Henry (aka Hank) W. Dressner, for information that could be used effectively to close down a moonshine ring in Tuttey County. I refolded the paper and put it on the desk, but kept my hand on it.

"Stop me if I'm wrong," I said, "but I don't think I am. It was all an elaborate frame-up. First off the bat, answer me this question: was Dressner really going to talk?"

Roche shook his head:

"Right. Then the whole idea of the letter you were typing was to get *Simple* to talk—or, should I say, to scrawl X's on that map? To get *Simple* to read that letter and conclude he'd better snitch before Dressner did, you had to get out of the office and make it seem natural. Believe me, there was nothing natural about your conversation with Helen and Jake. A writing course? Your wife has her hands full just holding together that scratch farm of yours. I'll bet there are no drag racers on 460 either. Good thing *Simple* wasn't listening in."

"So I'm a lousy actor."

"No, actually you're a pretty good one. And you had a good script before you tore it up. Why?"

"Ever hear of entrapment?"

Inwardly, I scoffed. *Simple* didn't deserve the sensitive consideration he was receiving.

"You should never wear your best trousers when you go out to fight for freedom and truth," I recited at Roche. "Henrik Ibsen, Nineteenth Century playwright."

"Our Union is now complete; our constitution composed, established, and approved. You are now the guardians of your own liberties," he recited at *me*. "Samuel Adams, Eighteenth Century revolutionary. Maybe you noticed, Sam was talking to me; I was having second thoughts even as I tightened the frame around *Simple*."

"We all know that *Simple's* guilty—" and I slipped smoothly into the cliché "—guilty as sin."

"You're confusing moral certitude with legal certainty," Roche answered evenly. "I don't know that *Simple's* guilty—legally. You know, catching a crook any which way you can isn't what this job is supposed to be. When you forget that just once it's easier to find situations when you can forget it again. Each time you substitute will for process, will becomes stronger, more important than process, until you're operating within a narrow-scoped sense of mission, a crusade in which the rules, *your* rules; don't look much like the laws you're sworn to apply."

"And sooner or later the innocent, the really blameless, suffer because they can't step out of the way fast enough. You can live on your strength and cleverness for a long while, but ultimately you have to face up to something else. I'm not going to let myself in for that kind of nightmare."

He stopped and looked at the paper on the desk, my hand still on it. I glanced down at it, then pushed it across to its author.

He picked it up and said, "Thanks, Oscar."

I winced and said, "Satisfy my curiosity. I'd like to know how you explained all this to Semple."

"I told him the truth. Gave him the map and—"

"You *gave* him the map! Why in God's name did you do that?"

"You still don't get the picture. If I wasn't going to use Semple as a material witness, I couldn't use anything I tricked him out of. I didn't really study that map after he marked it up. As I told you, my conscience was getting to me even then. So if I was going to do a turnabout, it only made sense to return to Semple anything I got out of him."

"What'd he say when you gave it to him?"

"Nothing. He just looked at me like I was crazy. Maybe what I saw was contempt, I don't know. Anyway, he took the map and cut mud for the woods."

"He'd better get rid of it."

"What he does with it is none of my concern."

"Where does this leave you?"

"Back where I started."

I looked at my watch. "I have to go. I'm interviewing a two-headed pig born last night on a farm near Argumenta."

"I'll walk you to your car."

Outside Roche's office, we almost fell over Jake Caudle who was on his way in. "Sheriff!" he said. "A patrol just reported Alex Semple's been found dead out beyond Old Moravia. Looks like he was beat up bad first."

For maybe ten seconds Roche didn't respond. Then he said to no one in particular, "He must have hung onto it. That was his death warrant. It was a fool thing to do."

"Maybe he didn't have a chance to get rid of it," I offered, "before he met up with bad news."

"Hung onto what, Sheriff?" Caudle asked.

"Did they find a map on Semple? A county map?"

"Nothing in the report about a map."

"Pick up Hank Dressner and search his place. Semple was killed because of that map. Find it and we nail Dressner for murder."

The map was found. Hank Dressner probably kept it to prove to his associates that Semple had to be dealt with. Dressner was picked

up, charged, brought to trial, and convicted on various counts, murder among them.

Roche, with the map once more in his hands, this time through a recognized legal process, felt disposed to use it. Moonshining, on the scale practiced by Semple and Dressner, was finished; a few days of lightning raids took care of that. In its place, a limited amount of illegal liquor was produced by old established families—which operation had been customary, perhaps even healthy, and, of most importance, benignly overlooked by the sheriff's department.

I followed the events in that unwinding story and wrote them all up. Well, almost all. My editor was happy with the story and I even got a raise of a few dollars—not much in buying power but heavy in prestige.

The story I wrote was a good story, but not the complete story I've written here. And, really, this story isn't complete either, for I can't describe adequately the look on Sheriff Roche's face when Jake Caudle told him Alex Semple was dead. It was a look of horror, of disbelief, of dawning realization that once you start moving toward a nightmare it's hard to turn back.

Roche was right. The trick is not to start.



a **NEW Simon Ark** story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Simon Ark was speaking on "Religion and the Decline of Magic" at a workshop on the Middle Ages being conducted at a university in The Bronx when Greg Hopkins, a junior partner in the law firm of Nevins & Scott, asked him to help out in the case of a wealthy client who claimed to be a witch.

Another impossible locked-room murder and dying message from the undyingly resourceful Mr. Hoch . . .

THE WITCH OF PARK AVENUE

by EDWARD D. HOCH

It was a junior partner at the law firm of Nevins & Scott who first contacted Simon Ark regarding the unlikely affair of Maud Slumber, the millionaire witch. Simon was speaking on "Religion and the Decline of Magic" at a workshop on the Middle Ages being conducted at a university in The Bronx, and this had brought him more than the accustomed amount of notice in the press.

"What am I to do, my friend?" he asked me over lunch at a Bavarian café on the west side of Manhattan. "I give a simple, straightforward interview to the afternoon paper and now I have requests like this one."

"What do they want you to do with this millionaire witch?" I asked. "Marry her?"

"Heaven forbid! Will you come with me to the lawyer's office?"

"I suppose I could." There were things to be done back at the office, but nothing that others couldn't handle for a few hours. And my curiosity was aroused.

So after lunch we took a taxi down to the Wall Street suite of Nevins & Scott and were ushered promptly into the office of Greg

© 1982 by Edward D. Hoch.

Hopkins, the junior partner who'd contacted Simon. "It's a pleasure," he said, rising to shake hands. I guessed his age to be around thirty, though a bushy mustache the same shade of red as his hair made it difficult to estimate exactly. His blue eyes were clear and honest, and I imagined him to be quite effective in a courtroom.

"You must understand," Simon told him, "that I'm not a private-inquiry agent. I can answer your questions about witchcraft but that is all. If you have a problem with this woman—"

"Oh, we have a problem with her all right. At least I do. Maud Slumber is seventy-eight years old and her estate is the largest one I handle. Frankly, I wouldn't want to offend her—it wouldn't be good for me or for the firm."

"You said on the telephone she's a millionaire."

"That's not violating any confidences. She donated a new wing to a New England medical school last year and she's talked publicly about establishing a foundation to handle the estate after she dies. About the only thing she doesn't mention in public is the fact that she's been a practicing witch for most of her life."

"How do you know that?" Simon Ark asked.

"Because she told me, in this very office. We got into a discussion about a year ago on how she managed to acquire her wealth. It seems it came mainly through large bequests from distant relatives and friends. That's when she told me she'd hexed them, that she was a witch."

"You couldn't have believed her," I said.

"Not at first, certainly. But Maud Slumber is an enigmatic woman. I came to realize that whether or not she really is a witch, she believes herself to be one."

"Sometimes believing is all that's necessary," Simon murmured. He was staring hard at the young lawyer. "Tell me, Mr. Hopkins—other than her persuasive conversation, has this woman demonstrated any evidence of witchcraft?"

"Well," he said slowly, choosing his words carefully, "there was the matter of her husband."

"You hadn't mentioned she was married."

"And I didn't believe her to be when I first acquired her as a client. She'd been with one of the older members of the firm who passed away and his clients were divided among several junior partners. The file listed her as unmarried and I never questioned her about it, but some months back she telephoned me one afternoon, quite agitated. It seems her former husband was back in town, demanding

money from her. I learned they'd been divorced about twenty years earlier, before she came into most of her money. He was a few years younger than Maud, still in his early seventies, and quite spry."

"What's his name?" I asked.

"Lyle Caser, but I'm afraid he's no longer with us." Hopkins hesitated, as if wishing he didn't have to tell us the rest of it. "She put a hex on him and he died." He showed us a photo of a bald man with glasses.

Simon leaned forward in his chair. "How did he die?"

"He fell through a plate-glass window in a department store. Apparently he had a seizure of some sort, but it was the glass that killed him. A sliver of it cut his throat."

"And Maud Slumber took credit for this?"

The young lawyer nodded. "She claims— But it's all nonsense, of course. It's not even worth repeating."

"And yet you're troubled enough to have summoned me."

Hopkins took a deep breath. "Attorneys have a certain responsibility for their clients—at least the responsibility to see that they don't break the law or harm anyone. Lyle Caser is dead, but he has a brother named Eric who's still very much alive. I'm afraid Maud Slumber might—might harm him next."

"Is this a matter for the police?"

"It's not a matter for the police or private detectives or anyone like that, Mr. Ark. Frankly, I was at my wits' end when I saw the notice of your appearance at the university. Maybe, just maybe, you could talk to her before anything else happens."

Because I knew Simon would never ask it, I interrupted with a practical question. "Is your firm offering to hire Mr. Ark as a consultant in this matter?"

"You must realize this isn't the sort of service that can be rebilled to the client. But the firm is willing to pay for any reasonable expenses, and for your time, of course. Could you call on Maud Slumber and persuade her to drop this foolishness?"

"By foolishness you mean her threat to put a hex on Eric Caser?"

"Yes," he answered quietly. "She's convinced the brother's reappeared to get her money. I suggested she simply disinherit them, but instead she's doing this."

"Threatening to kill Eric like she killed her ex-husband?"

"Yes."

Simon Ark stood up. "I'll be happy to talk with her. Please arrange for an appointment as soon as possible."

The appointment was for the following afternoon and I arranged to accompany Simon. The idea of meeting a millionaire witch who lived in a luxury Park Avenue condominium attracted me as much as it did Simon, and as we arrived by taxi I asked, "Do you think she's really a witch?"

"Greg Hopkins thinks she is—he thinks she can kill people by hexing them. When one is dealing with witchcraft appearances can often become reality."

"You mean that a person can fall through a plate-glass window simply because he believes his ex-wife has willed his death?"

"Something like that. In the Australian bush, where witchcraft of a sort is still practiced among the aborigines, the practice of pointing a bone at one's enemies has been known to cause their illness and death. But it only happens if the victim knows the bone has been pointed, if his imagination can be set to work to such an extent as to bring about a physical illness."

We passed through the revolving door of the building into a stark chrome-and-glass lobby where a security guard waited to ask our business. "And you think something like that has happened here?" I asked.

"We shall see, my friend," Simon replied. He gave the man the name of Maud Slumber and we waited to be announced.

Her door on the twenty-second floor was opened by a uniformed maid who greeted us with a French accent. She left us in a plush living room where gold-flecked wallpaper matched the golden threads of the furniture, momentarily distracting me from the breathtaking view of the Manhattan skyline to the south.

Then we were joined by Maud Slumber herself. She was a large woman, who moved to her chair with a sort of rolling motion. White-haired, wrinkled, showing the obvious signs of her seventy-eight years, her eyes were still alert and calculating as she faced us. "My lawyer sent you," she said, not bothering with introductions. "For what purpose?"

Simon cleared his throat. "My name is Simon Ark. I am a researcher into matters—"

"I know who you are. The Satan-hunter. The scourge of necromancy. The undying detective. What do you want of me?"

"Merely a conversation. I do not come to burn you at the stake or to test you with torture. You have said you are a witch and I accept that."

She bowed slightly, regaining something of her lost composure. "I have no caldron and no broomstick, Mr. Ark. I am not a threat to anyone."

"Young Greg Hopkins seems to think you may have been responsible in some manner for the death of your former husband."

She turned in her chair and issued orders to the maid. "Marie, bring us some tea." Then she returned to the conversation with Simon. "I trust tea is satisfactory. Now, Mr. Ark, in the matter of Lyle Caser, his death was tragic—but not unexpected by me."

"You had placed a hex or spell on him?"

She acknowledged that. "Not to kill him, but to drive him away. He and his brother had come back after all these years simply to see what they could get out of me. I sent someone to talk to them, but it did no good."

"So you killed your former husband."

"That's a harsh word, don't you think? I created an atmosphere in which he would be uncomfortable. If it caused his death I am sorry."

"And now Eric?" Simon asked with a slight smile.

"They were always very close. They're French, raised in Paris by a French father and an American mother. They moved here before the war and Lyle and I were married for about twenty years. I was not as wealthy then, but I was generous to them both. After the divorce they went away, and now they're back. Since Lyle's death a few weeks ago Eric has taken an apartment in Greenwich Village."

"How did you acquire your wealth?" Simon asked her. "If you have no objection to my curiosity."

"Not at all. I imagine Hopkins has told you already anyway. I have had a great many friends over the years and as they died their money has come to me."

"Through your powers as a witch?"

"If you will." Before she could say more, Marie entered with the tea on a silver tray. The old woman fell silent while we were served, and I took the opportunity to study Marie herself. She was a classic dark-haired beauty, with pale skin that made a vivid contrast to the blood-red lipstick she wore. "That will be all," Maud Slumber told her when tea had been served, and our conversation did not resume until the maid had retreated to the kitchen.

"Is she French too?" Simon asked.

"Marie? Yes. I watch my words around her. Lyle recommended

her to me when my former maid left last year and I've always had a nagging suspicion she was sent to spy for him."

"But Lyle is dead now," Simon reminded her.

"His brother Eric is alive. Sometimes I think they're more alike than twins."

"Which is why you've put a hex on him as well?"

"I'm an old lady and witchcraft is a hobby to me. Perhaps Lyle would have died anyway. His time had come."

"Then you're not threatening Eric?"

"What gave you that idea?"

"Your attorney."

"He talks, too—" The lobby buzzer interrupted her. "Marie, see who that is!" she called.

The maid reappeared to answer the buzzer and listened to the crackling intercom. "It's Doctor Langstrom, madam."

"Oh, have him come up," she said. Then, to Simon: "I'm sorry, but my doctor is here. Perhaps we can talk again sometime—about a mutual acquaintance."

Simon lifted himself to his feet. "And who might that be?"

"Why, Satan, of course."

From the kitchen came the sound of shattering glass. I made a move toward the closed door through which Marie had just disappeared. She came back through it, her chalk-white face without expression. "I'm deeply sorry, madam," she said. "I broke one of the water glasses."

Doctor Langstrom arrived before Maud Slumber could vent whatever anger she might have about the broken glass. Once the doctor was admitted she dismissed the maid and introduced us. Langstrom, a tall slender man with grey hair and a moustache, extended a bony hand. "Simon Ark. I've heard your name—aren't you lecturing up at my alma mater this week?"

They fell into a brief, friendly conversation while I edged toward the door. Presently Simon lumbered along after me.

"Interesting," he said when we were in the elevator.

"Who—Maud Slumber or the doctor?"

"Neither one," he replied enigmatically. "The maid."

"You mean she broke the glass when Satan was mentioned."

"It would seem she'd be accustomed to her mistress's behavior."

We were leaving the building by way of the revolving door, having passed the uniformed security man, when Simon's attention was

attracted by a bald man with thick glasses who was approaching the building with a purposeful stride.

"Pardon me, sir," Simon said, intercepting him on the sidewalk. "Would you happen to be Mr. Eric Caser?"

"Yes," the man replied. "Do we know one another?" He spoke with a decided French accent.

"We have never met," Simon replied, "but I came here because of you—and your brother."

"My brother is dead."

"I know that. An attorney, Gregory Hopkins, believes your life may be in danger too."

"From that witch's hex?" Caser snorted. "I have my own amulet against hexes." He started to push past us.

"Don't try to see her now," Simon warned.

Eric Caser turned to stare at him. "The thing which killed my brother will not harm me," he said. He entered the revolving door and started through.

"How did you know that was Eric Caser?" I asked Simon, but before he could answer something strange happened.

Caser, pushing through the revolving door, had somehow become stuck.

We heard him cry, or mutter in anger, and try to force the glass door inward. But something had jammed it, and even as we went to help from outside the security guard was walking toward it from the lobby.

Something seemed to frighten Caser and he turned away from the guard toward us, trying to push his way out again. When he saw it was useless he pounded on the glass, sheer panic washing over his face.

"Don't break the glass!" Simon shouted, perhaps remembering how Caser's brother had died. "Don't panic! We'll have you free in a minute!"

But then a shudder seemed to run through the imprisoned man's body. He clawed at his breast pocket and pulled out a black marking pen.

And as we watched, helpless, he printed a single jagged word on the glass in front of his face.

Then, his mouth working soundlessly, he dropped the pen and slid into a heap inside the jammed revolving door. The word he had printed on the glass was MARIE.

"He's dead," Simon said when the security guard had finally freed the jammed door. Then he told the man, "Phone upstairs to the Slumber apartment and get Dr. Langstrom down here."

"What killed him?" I asked.

"I don't know. It could have been his heart. He's no youngster."

I was staring at the glass of the revolving door and the word Caser had left there. "*He* didn't think it was his heart, Simon. He thought he was being murdered. He left us a dying message naming his killer."

But Simon ignored that for the moment. Dr. Langstrom had come down in answer to the summons and was kneeling beside the body. He tore open Caser's shirt and listened to his heart. "This man is dead," he confirmed.

"Do you know him, Doctor?" Simon asked.

"I've never seen him before, at least to my knowledge. Who is he?"

"Eric Caser, the brother of Maud Slumber's former husband."

"He was coming here to see her?"

"I assume so."

Langstrom loosened more of Caser's clothes and tried to pump a spark of life into him but without success. An ambulance and police car arrived on the scene. As the body was being taken away I noticed the security guard fussing with the revolving door and polishing the glass. "What happened to the word that was written there?" I asked him.

He looked blank. "What word? I didn't notice any word—just some dirty smudges." He was a dark-haired man in his thirties who looked as if he might have been a boxer once.

"What's your name?"

"Vic Tannet. What's it to you?"

"Are you employed by the building management?"

"Of course. Do you think I do this for my health?"

"What seems to be the trouble?" Simon asked, coming over to join us.

"He wiped off the word Caser wrote," I said.

"No matter. We saw what it said."

"But—"

"The police are treating it as a natural death. There's no reason yet for us to treat it any differently." He took my arm and led me away.

"You mean you believe this business of a witch's hex?" I said. "You believe those glass doors imprisoned and killed him somehow?"

"I believe he died before our eyes, trapped in the door with no living thing anywhere near him. He couldn't have been murdered, therefore his death must have been from natural causes."

And that's what we told Greg Hopkins later that afternoon, seated in his office overlooking Wall Street. At first he couldn't believe our words, but then he asked for a detailed account of our meeting with Maud Slumber and our later encounter with Eric Caser.

"How did you know it was Caser?" he asked Simon.

"You showed me a picture of his brother Lyle. And Maud Slumber made the remark that they were more alike than twins. When I saw a man so closely resembling the photograph approaching the building I made the simple deduction it was Eric."

"Eric dead! I still can't believe they could both go like that. Maybe the old woman is a witch after all."

"There are other possibilities," Simon remarked. "Coincidence, for one. But what can you tell me about Dr. Langstrom?"

The attorney shrugged. "He's an old friend of Maud's. A widower, getting along in years himself but still active. In addition to his own small practice he does a bit of research for the government. Some business with electric eels."

"And Marie, Miss Slumber's French maid?" Simon asked.

"I don't know anything about her. Maud mentioned her once recently, said she was seeing some man Maud didn't approve of, but that's all I know. I've only seen her once or twice when I called at the apartment."

Simon nodded, almost as if this was the answer he'd expected. "I'm sorry we couldn't have been of more help to you. We simply arrived too late."

"Too late?" Hopkins repeated, not understanding. "But I thought you were there when he died."

"Perhaps Eric Caser started to die a long time ago, when Maud Slumber first put her hex on him."

"Then you believe in witchcraft?"

"I believe in Maud Slumber. It may not be the same thing."

The following morning I was visited by Detective Sergeant Anthony Banto. He entered casually after my secretary announced him and glanced around at the framed cover art from some of our best-selling paperbacks. "First time I've ever been in a publishing com-

pany. Neptune Books, eh? My son reads a lot of them. You print 'em here in the building?"

"No, over in New Jersey. This is just the editorial and sales office."

"Interesting business, I suppose."

"You've come about the death I witnessed yesterday?"

"Yeah." He took out his notebook and thumbed through the pages. "Eric Caser. That the fellow?"

"That's him."

"Tell me what happened. You were there with another man. Simon Ark?"

"That's right." I went over the previous day's events once more, leaving out the part about Maud Slumber's hex. "Do you have the autopsy report yet?"

He scratched his ear and nodded. "That's why I'm here."

"Was it a heart attack?"

"No. He was poisoned."

"Poisoned!" I almost came out of my chair. "A slow-acting poison that just happened to kill him while he was stuck in the revolving door?"

Sergeant Banto shook his head, ignoring my sarcasm. "No, actually the medical examiner says it was a form of cyanide that would have caused death within less than a minute. It was apparently injected by a hypodermic needle into the victim's left arm."

"That's impossible," I insisted. "Simon Ark and I witnessed the whole thing. No one came near the man. He was trapped in this revolving door and no one was near him."

"What about after he was freed?"

"He was already dead then." I remembered the doctor and the security guard. "Even if he wasn't, Simon and I were there all the time. No one could have injected him without our seeing it."

The detective shook his head. "Well, he sure didn't commit suicide. No hypo was found on the body."

"His hands were in plain view all the time," I agreed. "He was writing on the glass with a marking pen."

"Writing?"

"I mentioned it earlier. He wrote the word Marie."

"As he was dying?"

"Yes. He seemed unable to speak and his strength was fading fast—he died in less than a minute."

"Was anyone named Marie on the scene?"

"No," I said. I told him about Maud Slumber's maid.

"But you have no reason to believe this was the Marie he meant, or even that he was trying to indicate the name of his killer?"

"No, but in detective stories a dying message is usually—"

"This isn't a detective story, sir. There was a movie when I was a kid—before your time, I guess—about a man who died saying the word *Rosebud*. Turned out at the end it wasn't the name of a person at all—just a sled he'd had as a kid. See what I mean about dying messages?"

"*Citizen Kane*," I remarked. "It wasn't before my time."

"But you get my point?"

"Yes."

"So think about it. Who could have injected this man Caser with the poison?"

I thought about it. "No one."

"You're sure?"

"No one," I repeated. "He couldn't have died that way."

"But he did. Unless you're willing to believe in the supernatural."

"Who said anything about the supernatural?" I asked.

"I should have told you I interviewed Simon Ark just before coming here. He seems to believe a supernatural explanation is possible. He said something about witchcraft."

"Oh."

"I'll be getting back to you," Banto said, rising.

As he was going out the door I asked, "Do you believe in witchcraft, Sergeant?"

He looked back and smiled. "Oh, no. Not me."

I telephoned Simon as soon as Banto had left and described my conversation with him. "My talk with him was quite similar," he said.

"How could Caser have been injected with poison in front of our eyes?" I asked.

"It's an interesting problem," Simon admitted. "Are you coming up to hear me speak tonight?"

"Of course." The evening session was a public portion of the university's workshop and Simon would be delivering a brief, popularized version of his student lectures.

"I'm leading off the program at eight."

"I'll be there."

I'd heard him speak many times before, but this evening Simon

delivered his concept of magic in the Middle Ages with a new verve that seemed to hypnotize the young audience. Watching his gestures, listening to his words, I could almost believe his occasional claim that he'd been there when the Inquisition burned its witches, when Gilles de Rais rode with Joan and the horned god danced beneath the winter moon.

Afterward I sought him out at the rear of the podium. "You really outdid yourself tonight, Simon," I said.

But he wanted nothing of my compliments. "Come here, my friend. A most unusual visitor is waiting for me backstage."

I followed him down a dimly lit corridor to a tiny office that had been given over to him for the evening. To my surprise a young woman sat patiently waiting for him—Marie, the maid.

She stood, startled, as I entered behind Simon, but he immediately calmed her. "You may speak freely in front of my friend. You have nothing to fear from either of us."

She nodded, and I noticed that she was clutching a wrinkled brown paper bag. "I had to see you, Mr. Ark," she said. "I heard you speaking with Miss Slumber yesterday, before—the death." She lifted her dark eyes to his. "It was the second death, you know."

"I know."

"Both brothers. Madam's former husband and now his brother."

"What have you brought me?" Simon asked.

"I found this in Madam's bedroom drawer." She thrust the bag into Simon's hands and sat back as if glad to be rid of it. "I thought of telling the police but decided to bring it to you instead."

He opened it carefully and extracted two identical stuffed manikins. The faces had been given crude male features and bits of hair. The clothing seemed fashioned from authentic pieces. They were named—one carried a slip of paper on its back with **LYLE** printed on it. **ERIC** was pinned to the back of the other. The Lyle puppet had a tiny sliver of glass embedded in its throat. The Eric puppet had a small pin sticking out of its left arm.

"My God, Simon!" I gasped. "Does such voodoo nonsense still go on?"

"It appears so," Simon murmured, examining the dolls with care. "Witches have always used puppets, for love charms and for harming enemies."

"Then this proves it—Maud Slumber is a witch!"

"Do not jump to hasty conclusions, my friend." He turned back to the French girl, asking, "When did you find these, Marie?"

"Earlier today, when I was cleaning."

"In a drawer, you said?"

"Yes."

"A drawer Miss Slumber often uses?"

She hesitated. "No. More likely one she would hide something in."

"Does she know you have taken these?"

"No—unless she looked for them while I was gone."

Simon nodded. "Tell me one thing. Did you know Eric Caser?"

Marie shook her head. "I never met him. I knew Lyle. He got me the job with Miss Slumber before he died. But I never knew his brother."

"Does Miss Slumber have a great many visitors to her apartment?"

"No. She hasn't got any friends. She told me they are all dead."

Simon returned the dolls to the paper bag. "I want you to return these," he instructed. "Put them back exactly as you found them."

"But—Aren't you going to tell the police?"

"Not quite yet."

She took the bag somewhat reluctantly and we saw her to the door.

Simon stared after her in the darkness, watching as she walked across the parking lot toward a waiting car. When she was almost up to it, the car's headlights went on. "Come," he said suddenly, "she's not alone."

"What if she isn't?"

"Remember Greg Hopkins telling us Maud didn't approve of a man she was seeing? I want to know who he is."

We reached the car just as it was pulling away. The glow from an overhead streetlight fell across the windshield and I could see Marie's startled face staring at us from the passenger seat. Behind the wheel sat Vic Tannet, the security guard.

We followed them back downtown in my car.

"It might not mean anything," I argued.

"Perhaps not," Simon agreed.

"So why are we following them back to Maud Slumber's apartment?"

"Because I want to make certain the dolls are returned intact."

We let ourselves be announced once more and accompanied Marie up to the apartment. Vic Tannet vanished with his car without speaking to us. "Don't you trust me?" Marie asked in the elevator. "Didn't you think I'd bring them back?"

"We can create a diversion," Simon explained, "while you return them to the drawer in which you found them."

But the diversion was not to be of our making. We walked in upon a scene of Maud Slumber, along with her attorney Greg Hopkins and Dr. Langstrom, sipping champagne from fluted Swedish glasses. "You're just in time to join the celebration," she said. "The more the merrier."

"What are we celebrating?" Simon asked, accepting a glass of champagne as Marie doffed her coat and disappeared into the bedroom.

"My wedding! Dr. Langstrom and I were married a week ago. I wanted to keep it secret but he's convinced me it's time to make it public."

We offered our somewhat startled congratulations while Dr. Langstrom beamed and shook hands. "You gentlemen work with Greg here?" he asked, obviously uncertain as to our function.

"They're advisers," Hopkins answered quickly.

"This has been the greatest week of my life," Langstrom said. "Dear Maud is the woman I need beside me. I'm glad she's agreed not to keep it a secret any longer."

Marie reappeared from the bedroom and Maud instructed her to open another bottle of champagne. "Mr. Hopkins has an empty glass, dear."

"No, no," the lawyer insisted. "I really must be going."

Simon and I decided to depart at the same time and Maud walked us to the door. "Dear Greg, I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner but you understand, don't you? We can take care of any legal technicalities next week."

"There shouldn't be any, unless you wish to change your will."

"We'll talk about it," she said, patting his shoulder. "Oh, and can you be here tomorrow morning? That detective, Banto, is coming at eleven and I'd feel better about seeing him if you were present."

"Sure," he answered agreeably. "I'll be glad to." He marked the time down in his date book.

She turned to Simon and said, "At my age, if only a woman could marry her doctor *and* her lawyer life would be so much easier."

Simon laughed, then paused at the door with a question. "Did anyone know about your marriage? Marie, for instance?"

She shook her head. "No one. No one at all."

"I'll see you in the morning," Hopkins told her.

In the elevator I remarked, "There was certainly no talk of witchcraft tonight."

Simon Ark smiled slightly. "Perhaps she used a love charm on Dr. Langstrom. Witches sometimes tie two puppets together with red ribbon to cast a spell over a desired love object."

"Puppets?" Hopkins asked.

"She had two hidden in her bedroom drawer," I told him. "Marie found them and brought them to Simon. They were labeled with the names of Lyle and Eric and pierced with glass and a pin."

"My God!"

"God was not the intended recipient of her prayers in this case," Simon said drily.

"But—if that's true, you're saying she caused the death of the Caser brothers. You're saying you have proof her hexes really work."

"Not at all." We'd reached the lobby and walked out past the security guard. It wasn't Vic Tannet. He was nowhere in sight. "What I'm saying is only that someone made those dolls, and that that same someone caused Eric Caser's death in this revolving door."

"Who else could it be but Maud?"

"Who else?" Simon repeated. "Marie, for one. Have you ever considered the possibility that Marie might be the real witch of Park Avenue?"

We talked far into the night, seated in a conveniently isolated booth at a bar near Grand Central Station. We'd walked there from Maud Slumber's and had felt the need to continue the conversation for a time.

"What do you mean," Greg Hopkins asked, "when you say that the person who made those puppets caused Eric Caser's death? What about Lyle Caser?"

"Lyle's death could have been an accident," Simon explained. "But Eric was certainly murdered. He was injected with poison in his left arm, the same arm that was pierced with a pin on the doll meant to represent him. Since the autopsy results have not been made public, there are only two possibilities to explain this: Either we believe in witchcraft or we believe that Eric's murderer made those dolls. Because a third person would not have known how Eric died."

"How could anyone have killed Eric with both of you watching?" the lawyer wanted to know.

Simon Ark, drinking an unaccustomed glass of imported beer, leaned back. "Let us examine a purely hypothetical possibility.

Maud Slumber imagines herself to be a witch, but in truth she has no powers. Lyle Caser, anxious to spy on his former wife, and possibly her relationship with Dr. Langstrom, plants Marie in the apartment as a maid. Marie in time takes up with the daytime security guard and they develop a scheme to fleece the old woman out of her money."

"That would be unlikely," Hopkins protested. "I keep a very careful eye on her finances."

"Let me finish, please. I told you this was hypothetical."

"Lyle is killed in an accident, but his brother Eric comes along and somehow learns of Marie and Vic's scheme. He threatens to tell the old lady and they have to kill him—but in such a way that it'll be linked to Lyle's death and Maud's claims of witchcraft. They make the dolls and Marie plants them in the apartment. She told us Maud never has visitors, so who else could have done it? Then Vic lies in wait for Eric in the building lobby. He jams the revolving door with a small metal wedge and somehow manages to inject the poison into him as he struggles to free him. Eric doesn't know Vic, but in his dying moment he realizes who must be behind the plot and he scrawls Marie's name on the glass. Vic wipes it off as soon as he has the chance."

"But how could he inject Eric?" I wanted to know. "The door was always between them. You implied before that Eric wasn't killed until later."

"No," Simon admitted. "He was dead before we freed him from the door."

"Then how was Eric poisoned?"

"We can work that out later," Greg Hopkins said. "I like most of it—it makes sense. And when no one found the dolls where Marie had planted them, she pretended to find them herself and bring them to you, Simon. It all hangs together."

"All you have to do is prove it," I commented.

We fell silent for a bit, thinking about that.

It was late when we finished talking and I phoned my wife Shelly to tell her I'd be staying in town overnight, taking the spare bed in Simon's temporary room at the university.

Which was how I happened to be with him at breakfast in the morning when Sergeant Banto showed up. "You fellows live together or something?" he asked, settling down at our table in the dining hall.

"I missed the last train to Westchester," I explained. "Simon put me up overnight."

"What's on your mind?" Simon asked Banto. "I thought you were seeing Maud Slumber this morning."

"I am, at eleven. But I thought I'd see you first." He reached into his pocket and took out a small plastic device of a sort I'd never seen before. "Any idea what this thing is?"

Simon took it and turned it over in his hands. It was round and flat, a couple of inches in diameter, with a hollow channel running along one side. There was a small spring in the channel and I could see a little lever that latched the spring and held it in place. "Look," I showed him, "when the spring is latched a certain amount of pressure on the side plate will release it. Whatever's put in this channel would be propelled forward about an inch."

"Where did you find this?" Simon asked Banto.

"In Eric Caser's room. He had an apartment in Greenwich Village. There was nothing else of interest, but this intrigued me because I don't know what it is."

"I saw one once before, years ago," Simon said. "Remember, my friend, when we investigated the killings at the army base in the desert back in the 1950s? They were still doing research into nerve gas then and working on possible defensive measures. That was always the problem—how do you protect yourself against a gas that kills within seconds, before you have time to put on a protective mask?"

"This thing protects against gas?" Banto asked, unbelieving.

Simon nodded. "It was tested but never issued to the troops. The threat of nerve gas simply faded away. The idea was that an antidote had been developed. Work on it was begun during World War II. All that was needed was an instant manner of injection during possible exposure. A tiny hypodermic needle was fitted into this channel and loaded with one shot of the nerve-gas antidote. The disc was worn taped to the arm or leg. Pressure on this side—simply by squeezing the arm against the body—was enough to release the spring and inject the needle into the skin. It took only a second and that was fast enough to counteract the nerve gas."

"Eric Caser wasn't killed with nerve gas," Banto said.

"No, but this little device has solved the case for us."

"How's that?"

"Do you want proof of the killer's identity, Sergeant? Do you want to make a capture red-handed?"

Banto laughed. "Why not?"

"Then tell Maud Slumber you're going down to search Caser's apartment later this afternoon. Make up some excuse why you haven't been there before this. Tell her you're looking for some clue as to how he died."

"All right. I can do that."

"Say nothing else. Just tell her you're going down after lunch. Meanwhile, give us the address and we'll watch the place till you get there."

"I've got detectives who can do that."

"What's the address?"

Banto told us. "All right," he said, "here's the key. Put this gadget back in one of the drawers for me and then get out. My men will cover it from there. If you're right, she'll try to get to it before I do my search, is that right?"

"Something like that," Simon admitted.

"Go to it."

We took a taxi down to the Village, arriving at the apartment on Bleecker Street just a few minutes after eleven. "I'm surprised he trusted us," I remarked to Simon.

"He didn't. He radioed ahead. There's a detective in that doorway watching us. He had nothing to lose by going along with my idea, but that doesn't mean he trusts us."

I unlocked the apartment door and we entered the silent, plainly furnished room. There was a desk and a few books, mainly in French, with a sofa that converted to a bed at night. It was the apartment of someone on the move, a rest stop along a journey. Simon slipped the plastic device into a dresser drawer, making no attempt to hide it.

"Let's go," I said.

He touched my shoulder. "No, my friend. We stay."

"But the police—"

"We stay. Our killer is a very slippery individual who may expect a trap."

"What if Marie isn't there to hear Banto say he's going to search the apartment?"

"She'll be there."

"And she'll tip off Vic Tannet, right?"

"We shall see."

So we waited, standing behind a curtain that hid a small walk-in

kitchen from the rest of the studio apartment. We waited for an hour and nothing happened. The noontime street noises drifted up, but no intruder came.

"It's hopeless, Simon," I said. "A good idea but—"

"Quiet!" he whispered.

There was a scratching at the lock and suddenly the door popped open. A figure moved across the room, searching quickly in the likely places. I could see it was a man.

And then I remembered that Maud Slumber hadn't been alone at her meeting with Sergeant Banto. She'd asked Greg Hopkins to be present too.

I heard a drawer slide open. He'd found the thing he sought.

"Don't try to escape," Simon said, stepping through the curtains.

He turned then, his face twisted with fury, and his hand went to his pocket. I saw the hypodermic needle held high, beginning its swing toward Simon, and then Banto was there, crashing in from the fire escape.

There was an instant's struggle as Banto flung himself on the man and toppled him to the floor. "Get that needle!" Simon warned Banto. "It'll be full of cyanide!"

Then the struggle went out of Banto's captive and I got my first clear look at his face.

It wasn't Greg Hopkins.

It was Doctor Langstrom.

"I wasn't surprised," Simon Ark said later. "From the minute Banto showed us that device I knew it had to be Langstrom. He did government research with electric eels, remember? During the Second World War the antidote for nerve gas was developed through continuing research with electric eels. Langstrom had these gadgets and it was a simple enough task to persuade Eric Caser to wear one."

"How simple?"

"Eric's brother had already been killed, possibly as a result of Maud Slumber's hex. Langstrom convinced Eric she'd used some sort of nerve poison on her ex-husband and that she planned to kill him the same way. After all, Langstrom was a respected physician and Eric believed him in medical matters. What's more, Langstrom told him he and Maud had just been married, giving him an inside track on her plans—he didn't want Eric to die like his brother, he said, so he had to be prepared with this poison antidote."

"But there was no poison," Sergeant Banto said.

"Exactly. Langstrom couldn't have known Eric would get stuck in the revolving door, of course—that was just happenstance. He'd probably warned him to beware of the elevator or some other part of the building. Beware of closed spaces, he might have said. He knew that sooner or later Eric—very nervous by now—would squeeze the disc to his side and inject himself with the antidote that was really poison. It didn't really matter if the disc was found still taped to the dead man's arm—there was nothing to connect it to Langstrom.

"But as luck would have it he was in the building, at Maud's apartment, when Eric died and he was the first to examine the body. So when he ripped open Eric's shirt to try to 'revive' him it was a simple matter to pull the disc and tape from his arm and pocket them. Naturally he'd call Maud for a rundown on her talk with Banto, so he learned of Banto's plan to search this apartment later. I supposed he'd given Eric a duplicate disc in the event the first one malfunctioned. Remember, when we met Eric in front of the apartment house he told us he had his own amulet against hexes? This was it, only it killed him."

"Then Lyle's death and Eric being stuck in the revolving door were only coincidences?"

"Yes," Simon said, "if such things can ever be coincidence. Langstrom made up the two dolls after the deaths, of course, using a bit of glass to indicate the method of Lyle's death. He planted them in Maud's bedroom himself, knowing they'd be found. I imagine it was the first part of a long-range plan to have her declared insane. Marie said no one ever came to the apartment. But of course Dr. Langstrom did."

"But why did he kill Eric?" I asked.

"Maud had left Lyle and Eric money in her will—a sum which had grown to a great deal of money, I believe. When she threatened to put a hex on them, Hopkins suggested she simply disinherit them instead. But even after Langstrom talked her into marriage she was still reluctant to change her will. So with Lyle already gone by accident, Langstrom decided to kill Eric and have all the money for himself. Maud told us she sent someone to talk to the brothers when they came back into her life. I'm sure that was Langstrom. That's how he struck up the acquaintance with Eric."

"He must have been very persuasive to convince Eric to inject something into his body."

"Oh, he was," Simon agreed. "The perfect bedside manner. After all, he persuaded Maud to marry him. But even Eric must have realized the truth at the moment he was dying. That's why he managed to print that word on the glass. And that's how I knew the doctor had confided his wedding news to Eric."

"But he printed *Marie*! What did she have to do with any of it?"

"Nothing. You'll remember she told us she never met Eric. Lyle knew her, but not Eric. He wasn't trying to tell us her name. He was trying to indicate the man who had tricked him into poisoning himself. And as he died he reverted to his native French tongue. Langstrom was too long a name to print, so he managed *marie* instead—the French word for bridegroom."

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

WANTED: ONE VILLAIN

by LOLA STRONG JANES

I sat down to write out a mystery story,
Something perplexing and suitably gory,
Poison or knives or perhaps a revolver—
Sprinkled with clues just to help out the solver.
But I found that I just couldn't shoot, stab, or pill one—
I loved all my characters too much to kill one.
So now I am searching for so foul a villain
That I'll have the nerve to get on with the killin'.

© 1982 by Lola Strong Janes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED MARKET PLACE

ELLERY QUEEN—is published 13 times a year. The rate for **CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS** is \$1.35 per word, payable in advance—minimum ad \$27.00. Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be included in the next issue, please send order and remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, **DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC.**, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

ADDITIONAL INCOME

SINCERE book sales agents wanted now! Part-time or full. Do not confuse with usual worn-out offers. No experience needed. Send \$1.00 J. Johnson Enterprises, Dept. C92, Box 906, McKeesport, PA 15134-0906.

AUTOMOBILES & MIDGET CARS

IS 200 MPG Possible? DID someone achieve it? Write **MPG-DPC882**, Box 2133, Sandusky, OH 44870.

200 MPG Carburetor Fact/Fiction? Did Someone Achieve It? Write! **HMP-DPC882**, Box 143, Bellevue, OH 44811.

AVIATION

ANTIGRAVITY PROPULSION DEVICE! Free Brochure. **RDA**, Box 873, Concord, NC 28025.

BLUEPRINTS, PATTERNS & PLANS

CRAFT PRINT CATALOG—Choose from over 100 great easy-to-build plans. Send \$1.50 (completely refunded with your first order). **BOAT BUILDER**, (CP Div.)—380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10037.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

FREE CATALOGUES, hardbacks, paperbacks. Search Service. **Detective Mystery Booksearch**, Box 15460, Orlando, Florida, 32808.

FREE List! Used hardcover mystery detective fiction. **Dunn's Mysteries**, 251 Baldwin Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450.

MYSTERY, Detective, Science-Fiction. **FIRST EDITIONS. PAULETTE GREEN RARE BOOKS**. 140 Princeton Road, Rockville Centre, NY 11570. Catalogue \$2.00.

BRITISH and American Mystery Paperbacks, Hardcover, Magazines. Free Catalog: **Grant Thiessen**, Box Z-86A, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

WORLD's largest mystery specialist (30,000 volumes). No obligation search service. Send \$2 for next 4 catalogues. **Aardvarks Book Detectives**, P.O. Box 15070, Orlando, FL 32858.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

ISAAC ASIMOV's SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, published monthly. Send \$16.98 for 13 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 1855 G.P.O., New York, NY 10001.

TOP \$\$\$ for 1st edition Mystery Fiction Pre-1960. Manuscript material also bought, and old Black Mask Magazines. Our address **BOOK SAIL**, 1186 N. Tustin, Orange, CA 92667 (714) 997-9511.

TEN Thousand Used Paperback Mysteries. Long List Free. **Jet Collectibles**. 732 Sixth Ave., Aurora, IL 60505.

MYSTERIES BY MAIL. Huge selection. Paperback, hardcover, related items. Send stamped envelope for catalog. **Sherlock's Home**, 5614 E. Second St., Long Beach, CA 90803.

"FOR LOVERS." The most intimate Book of Poems ever written for those in love and those alone. For your copy, send \$10.00 + \$1.50 handling to Vanstead, Dept. E, Box 382, Freehold, NJ 07728.

THE SHERLOCK HOLMES CARTOON BOOK! by Marc Bilgrey. Isaac Asimov says: "A chucklesome must for all true Sherlockians." A collector's item! Send \$5.95 (includes shipping & postage) to: Cuckoo Bird Press, P.O. Box 501 Ansonia Station, New York, NY 10023.

WANTED: Mystery/Detective "Want Lists." No Fees. No Obligation. Send for free Catalogue. **The Silver Door**, Box 3208, Redondo Beach, CA 90277.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. CATALOGUES ISSUED EVERY MARCH/SEPTEMBER. SEND **I.R.C. HAMILTON, PARC, CAIO, DYFED, WALES, U.K.**

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

STAY HOME! EARN BIG MONEY addressing envelopes. Genuine offer 10¢. **Lindco**, 3636-DA, Peterson, Chicago 60659.

FREE BOOK "2042" Unique Proven Enterprises. "Fabulous 'unknowns,'" second inflation income. **Haylings-E12** Carlsbad, CA 92008.

Classified Continued

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

BECOME an ordained minister. Start a non-profit organization. Many benefits! Credentials and information \$10.00. Universal Life Church, 13335 Seabright Av (8M), Santa Cruz, CA 95062.

GOOD INCOME WEEKLY! Processing mail! Free Supplies! Postage! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DC3, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

1000% Profit Bronzing or Chinakoting Baby Shoes. Free Literature. NBSDG, 398 Sebring Airport, Sebring, FL 33870.

SPARE TIME DISTRIBUTORS NEEDED! Unlimited Profits! Proven Automotive Product. Free Details! MOTALOY, Box 4457 D8, Downey, CA 90241.

BUY IT WHOLESALE

400,000 BARGAINS Below Wholesale! Many Free! Liquidations . . . Closeouts . . . Job Lots . . . Single Samples. Free Details. Worldwide Bargainhunters, Box 730-10, Holland, MI 49423

PLEASE Be sure to include your zip code when ordering merchandise from classified advertisements. You'll receive faster delivery.

FIREWORKS—Just send \$1.00 for catalog to: Kellner Fireworks Co., Box 67, Oil City, PA 16301.

DIAMONDS - Wholesale - Send \$3.50 for "The Diamond Guide!" Or write: Recess, P.O. Box 178C, Manchaca, Texas 78652-0178 for FREE DETAILS - Guaranteed Satisfaction.

CAMERAS & PHOTO SUPPLIES

FREE! 50 Rolls Kodak Color Film certificates with 50 for \$15.00, 200-\$20.00. Any size. Amazing 10¢ gifts! Guaranteed. Cash, Check, Money Order, VISA, Mastercard. Call Webco Toll Free 1-800-824-7888 California 1-800-852-7777 operator 108. Or mail: Webco, 3825-C Sunnydale, Benbrook, Texas 76116.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

UNIVERSITY Degrees By Mail. Accredited, Educational Counselors. Shinehouse Ltd., 15015 Ventura Boulevard, Sherman Oaks, California 91403.

UNIVERSITY Degrees By Mail. EDUCATION, 256 South Robertson, Dept. 25, Beverly Hills, CA 90211. (213) 652-6452.

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.'s . . . Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 189-EQ-8, Tustin, CA 92680.

FILM & TV SCRIPTS

WRITERS AND COLLECTORS. Over 700 movie and television shooting scripts! Hitchcock to Spielberg. Send \$1.00 for Catalog. Scriptfinders, 1626 N. Wilcox, Hollywood, CA 90028. Suite #348.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

GIFTS and Household items. Send \$3.00 for Catalog. 25% off retail. Dale L. Noe Enterprises, 100 E. Union #4, Orcutt, CA 93455.

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, published monthly. Send \$13.94 for 12 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 1855 G.P.O., New York, NY 10001.

HOBBIES & COLLECTIONS

GREAT RADIO PROGRAMS - mystery, adventure, science-fiction. Free list cassettes. Rare Radio, Box 117, Sunland, CA 91040.

HYPNOTISM

FREE Catalog. Hypnotism, Hypnotic cassettes, sleep learning. Become the person you truly want to be. DLMH, Box 487, Anaheim, CA 92805.

IMPORT—EXPORT

MARKET 2500 Amazing New "Fast-Sellers" Without Risk. Free Brochures! Ballrightco, Box 91309-N8, Cleveland, Ohio 44101.

JEWELRY

CLOSEOUT JEWELRY. 55¢ Dozen. 25¢ gets catalog. ROUSSELS, 107-310 Dow, Arlington, MA 02174.

LOANS BY MAIL

QUICK MAILLOANS! FREE APPLICATION FORM AND COMPLETE DETAILS RUSHED IMMEDIATELY! Lenco, Box 724-W9, McMinnville, Oregon 97128.

OBTAIN A Mastercard/Visa Entirely By Mail! Free Details! Write: Credit-DPC882, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870.

BORROW \$30,000 without interest! All eligible. Repay anytime. Free details. Infohouse, Box 1004-EQ8, New York, NY 10003.

BORROW By Mail! Signature Loans, No Collateral! Free Details! Write! MBG-DPC882, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870.

THE ARABS HAVE MILLIONS TO LOAN, INVEST! FREE DETAILS! Arab-DC, 935 Main, Vidor, TX 77662.

Classified Continued

LOANS BY MAIL—Cont'd

BORROW \$25,000 "OVERNIGHT." Any purpose. Keep indefinitely! Free Report reveals little-known sources/techniques! Success Research, Box 19739-SV Indianapolis, IN 46219.

MEMORY IMPROVEMENT

INSTANT MEMORY . . . NEW WAY TO REMEMBER. No memorization. Release your PHOTOGRAPHIC memory. Stop forgetting! FREE information. Institute of Advanced Thinking, 845DP ViaLapaz, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

MISCELLANEOUS

TECHNICAL SECRETS—Electronic Surveillance, Lock-Picking, etc. Free brochures: Mentor-DP, 135-53 No. Blvd., Flushing, NY 11354.

OLDTIME radio programs. Suspense, drama, science fiction, comedies. Highly enjoyable tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Route One, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

\$ SAVE! Fabulous Gems For Jewelry. Collecting! Details Free. W. Taylor Gemcutter, 113-A Martin, Indian Harbor Beach, FL 32937.

SAVE Your Money—Booklet reveals classified advertising persuasion secrets. See through their pitch. Know what you're ordering. \$5.00. Ads, Box 9085, Chesapeake, VA 23321.

SALE! Cut electric bills 50% — \$2.95. Why not Amtrack? — \$2.95. 105 Ways making money at home — \$2.00. Women's Guide to Wall Street — \$3.95. Make money with your ideas — \$2.95. Spare time profits for women — \$2.95. Added attraction! Zodiac tags for Dog and Cat! — \$3.98. Catalogs — \$1.00. How to build Gun Cabinets — \$3.98. Cargen-E, 1829 Euterpe, Box 52752, New Orleans, LA 70152.

SHROUD OF TURIN. Authentic reproduction. Impressive. Suitable for display. FREE booklet and more. Send \$3.00 to: American Catholic Christian Fellowship Church, Suite 217, 612 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

\$300 WEEKLY SPARE TIME — Mailing Salesletters. Details: Delta: Dept.-D, Box 2902-CRS, Rock Hill, SC 29730.

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write A Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth \$2.00 towards a classified ad in this publication. Send \$1.75 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

SELL Books By Mail! Big Profits! Write for Free! Details! Books-DPC882, Box 2133, Sandusky, OH 44870.

\$60.00 per Hundred securing — stuffing envelopes from home. Offer-details: Rush stamped self-addressed envelope. Imperial, P-460, X17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

\$60.00/Hundred stuffing envelopes!! Offer-details RUSH stamped addressed envelope: IMPERIAL-P460, Box 17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

EXPERT reveals secret for making money. Free details: Dept. B, Peelco, Meridian, MS 39302-3706.

MYSTICAL formula transmutes \$\$\$ and multiplies it into more value and buying power. \$5.00—our guarantee: Your \$5.00 refunded if you don't receive double that value in goods and services the first time you try this proven method. Zion's Storehouse, 8504 W. Arden, Milwaukee, WI 53225.

\$1000 WEEKLY POSSIBLE Mailing Envelopes! Easy Guaranteed Program! Free Details: Majestic, Box 415-D, Lewiston, NY 14092.

BIG money in the mail. Start immediately. Send \$3.00 to TNC Enterprises, 283 Longnecker St., Buffalo, NY 14206.

\$500+ WEEKLY in spare time; easy, guaranteed. Start immediately! Free details. Box 6946-D, Chicago, IL 60680-6946.

PHOTOGRAPHY—PHOTO FINISHING

SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS!!!! Make your own S & M Densitometer. Send \$5.00 for detailed drawings and instructions. A must for successful photography in your darkroom. Order direct: S & M Instruments, Dept. EQ, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Meet that special person—anywhere! DATELINE, 316 Fifth Ave., New York 10001, (212) 889-3230, (213) 854-0640.

BECOME A Legally Ordained Minister. Free Details ULC-DPC882, Box 2133, Sandusky, Ohio 44870.

PRETTY PHOTOS. Correspondence, romance, marriage. Asia, Latin America. Golden Heart, Box 2423-DA, Yakima, WA 98907.

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Hundreds of sincere members! All Ages! Free information! Write: Identity, Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

Classified Continued

PERSONAL—Cont'd

SPACE GODDESS POSTERS. Two unbelievable SF conversation "piece" prints now only \$3.00. Raindrop Studio, P.O. Box 20193, Portland, OR 97220.

SCANDINAVIAN Ladies, 18-68, sincere, seek correspondence, friendship, marriage. Details: Scannacub, Dept. CO3, POB 4, Pittsford, NY 14534. (Please enclose stamp).

HAVE CONFIDENTIAL CHICAGO MAILING ADDRESS or branch office. Business, Personal; Since 1944! Mail Center, 323(g) Franklin, Chicago 60606.

HEMORRHOID sufferers seeking continuous lasting COMFORT. Send \$5.00 check — Money back Satisfaction — to Macauley JE, 17465 Foy St., Los Angeles, CA 90017.

FASCINATING Personal Information Revealed! Everything supplied to quickly chart your own unique biorhythms. Easy instructions plus interpretation guide. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Send \$5. to Cyclocynes, Box 3252, Salem, OR 97302.

RADIO & TELEVISION

CABLE TV DESCRAMBLERS and CONVERTERS. PLANS and PARTS. Build or buy. For information send \$2.00. C&D Electronics, P.O. Box 21, Jenison, MI 49428.

RECORDS, TAPES & SOUND EQUIPMENT

FREE Promotional albums, concert tickets, stereos, etc. Information: Barry Publications, 477 82nd Street, Brooklyn, New York 11209.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

FREE FASCINATING Illustrated Self-Hypnosis Tape Catalog! Eliminate weight, stress—Gain health, happiness. Over 50 titles. Research-DV3, 13906 Ventura, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

SPECIAL SERVICES

MAIL Forwarding. Have your mail waiting wherever you go or will hold for instructions. Member Chamber of Commerce. MCCA, P.O. Box 2870, Estes Park, Colorado 80517. (800) 525-5304.

ASTROLOGICAL CHART. Planet positions at Birth. Personality traits. Basic chart plus preview any week \$14.00. Any month \$20.00. Send date, time and place of birth to T. McCarthy, Ast., Box 212, Winthrop Harbor, Illinois 60096.

STAMP COLLECTING

"COLLECTORS LOOK! 100 Worldwide Stamps \$1.00, 500 \$4.50, 1,000 \$8.00. Order Yours Today. Goforth, Box 468EQ, Big Pine Key, FL 33043.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE

MOONSTONE BOOKCELLARS, INC., 2145 PENN. AVE., NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20037. WASHINGTON'S ONLY SCIENCE AND MYSTERY SPECIALTY BOOKSHOP. 202-659-2600.

TIPS FOR THE HOME, ETC.

GET ADVICE on how to economize in modernizing or adding space from idea to completion. Working blueprint available. Send \$2.25 (includes postage) for 110 Better Building Ideas to: Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

TOYS, GAMES & ENTERTAINMENT

ATTENTION FANTASY GAMERS! Now there is a magazine expressly for you . . . The Oracle. Send \$2.00 for a sample today. Horizon International, Box 27513-B, Salt Lake City, UT 84127.

WATCHES, WATCHMAKING & REPAIRING

TIME STIK. The clock you can put anywhere. FREE details. D. R. Company, 4405 Aldrich Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55409.

WATCH and clock repairing books, tools, materials. Free Catalog. North America, Box 79, 1092, Fox River Grove, IL 60021.

**PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR FICTION COMBINATIONS:
Mystery, Sci-Fi, or Special**

**Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.
For further information write to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director,
Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.**



ORDER FORM

Send to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE
Classified Advertising Department/Suite 1401
380 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

YOUR NAME _____

FIRM (NAME IN AD) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

PHONE: _____

DATE: _____

YOUR SIGNATURE _____

\$ _____ is enclosed for _____

insertion(s) in the _____

issue(s) _____

Heading _____

(FOR ADDITIONAL WORDS ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET)

(1) \$27.00	(2) \$27.00	(3) \$27.00	(4) \$27.00	(5) \$27.00
(6) \$27.00	(7) \$27.00	(8) \$27.00	(9) \$27.00	(10) \$27.00
(11) \$27.00	(12) \$27.00	(13) \$27.00	(14) \$27.00	(15) \$27.00
(16) \$27.00	(17) \$27.00	(18) \$27.00	(19) \$27.00	(20) \$27.00
(21) \$28.35	(22) \$29.70	(23) \$31.05	(24) \$32.40	(25) \$33.75
(26) \$35.10	(27) \$36.45	(28) \$37.80	(29) \$39.15	(30) \$40.50

HOW TO COUNT WORDS: Name and address must be included in counting the number of words in your ad. Each initial or number counts as 1 word: Mark Holly, 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017. 7 WORDS. Zip codes are not counted: Phone #: 2 WORDS. Symbols used as keys are charged for: City or State count as 1 word: Garden City, New York; 2 words. Abbreviations such as C.O.D., F.O.B., P.O., U.S.A., 7X10, 35mm count as 1 word. (P.O. Box 145 count as 3 words) Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary will be used as our authority for spelling, compound words, hyphens, abbreviations, etc. **Please make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE**

Only \$27.00 for 20 words or less
\$1.35 each additional word

Capitalized words add—40¢ per word
**SAVE 15% WITH 3 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS
SAME COPY ORDER**

DEADLINE: Copy and payment must be in by the
5th day of the third preceding month for issue in
which ad is to appear.

Words at \$1.35 each \$ _____

Capitalized word at .40¢ each _____

Total amount for 1 ad \$ _____

15% Savings with 3 Consecutive Months Discount

(a) Multiply one ad total \$ _____ x 3 = \$ _____

(b) Multiply total amount on above line by .85 _____

(c) Total amount for 3 ads \$ _____

(Example: One 20 word ad \$27.00 x 3
months = \$81.00 x .85 = \$68.85)

NEXT ISSUE...

13 NEW stories—including

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Captain Leopold)

PATRICIA MOYES (about an honest blackmailer)

LAWRENCE BLOCK (about Ehrengraf)

ANDREW GARVE (about a stowaway)

CLARK HOWARD (about old soldiers)

JOYCE PORTER (about Inspector Dover)

KAREN A. PRINCE *Editorial Assistant*
RALPH RUBINO *Art Director*
DAVID PINDAR *Associate Art Director*
WILLIAM F. BATTISTA *Advertising Director*
JIM CAPELLO *Advertising Manager*
CARL BARTEE *Production Director*
CAROLE DIXON *Production Manager*
ROBERT CASTARDI *Circulation Director,*
Retail Marketing
ALAN INGLIS *Circulation Director,*
Subscription
LAYNE LAYTON *Promotion Manager*
IRIS TEMPLE *Director, Subsidiary Rights*
BARBARA BAZYN *Permissions & Contracts*
Manager
ROSE WAYNER *Classified Advertising*
Director

JOEL DAVIS
President & Publisher

LEONARD F. PINTO
Vice President &
General Manager

CAROLE DOLPH GROSS
Vice President
Marketing & Editorial

LEONARD H. HABAS
Vice President
Circulation

FRED EDINGER
Vice President
Finance

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 80, No 3, Whole No. 469, August, 1982. Published 13 times a year, every 28 days, by Davis Publications, Inc., at \$1.50 a copy. Annual subscription \$16.25 in U.S.A. and possessions; \$19.75 elsewhere, payable in advance and in U.S. funds. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 1930, Marion Ohio 43305. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. © 1982 Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE ® is the registered trademark of Ellery Queen. Printed in U.S.A.: Submission must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. ISSN: 0013-6328.

NEW YORK
212-557-9100

CHICAGO
312-346-0712

LOS ANGELES
213-785-3114

12 BEST-SELLING MYSTERIES JUST \$1.

Take these 12 best-selling thrillers for only \$1.00. These books cost \$102.40 in the original publishers' editions—but to introduce you to The Detective Book Club, we'll send you all of these superb mysteries in four handsome hardbound triple volumes (shown in the coupon) for only \$1.00-plus shipping.

As a member, there is no minimum number of books you must buy. You may reject any volume before or after receiving it. And you may cancel your membership at any time, without penalty or hurt feelings.

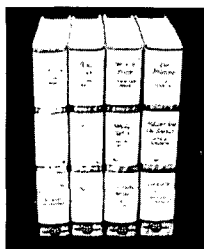
Save \$6 or more on every mystery you read.

When you accept a club selection you get three full length novels in one hard-cover triple-volume for only \$7.49 plus shipping. That's at least \$6 less than one mystery costs in the publisher's original edition.

The club's editors select the best from some 400 mystery books each year. Selections include new thrillers by the authors of your first 12 books, plus Len Deighton, Dick Francis, Harmond Innes, and many more.

Mail the coupon now to get your twelve best-selling mysteries for \$1. The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, New York 11576.

FILL OUT COUPON, CLIP ALONG DOTTED LINE—THEN MAIL.



Please enroll me as a member and send me at once my 4 triple-volumes shown here, containing 12 mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for one week, then will either accept all four volumes for the special new member price of only \$1 plus shipping, or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the club's monthly Preview which describes my next selections. I will always have at least ten days to reject any volume by returning the form provided. I may return any book for full credit within 21 days. For each monthly triple-volume I keep, I will send you only \$7.49, plus shipping. I understand I may cancel my membership at any time.

The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Street _____

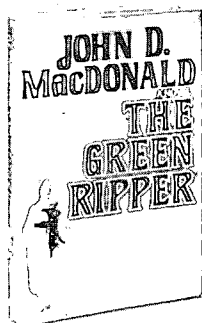
City _____

State _____ Zip _____

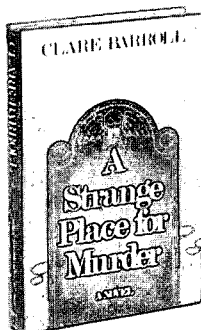
Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only; offer slightly different in Canada.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

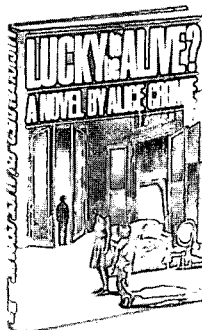
12 BEST-SELLING MYSTERIES JUST \$1.



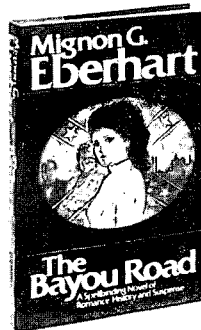
The Green Ripper by John D. MacDonald. (Publ. Ed. \$8.95)



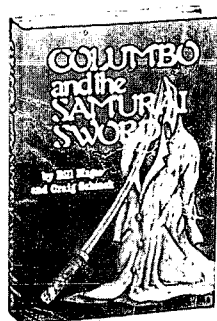
A Strange Place for Murder by Clare Barroll. (Publ. Ed. \$8.95)



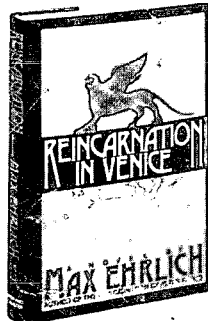
Lucky to be Alive by Alice Cromie. (Publ. Ed. \$9.95)



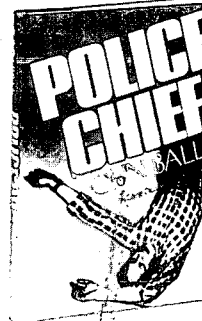
The Bayou Road by Mignon G. Eberhart. (Publ. Ed. \$8.95)



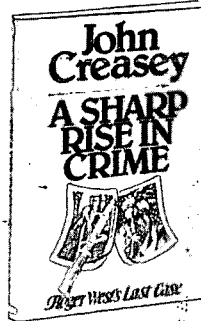
Columbo and the Samurai Sword by Bill Magee and Craig Schenck. (Publ. Ed. \$7.95)



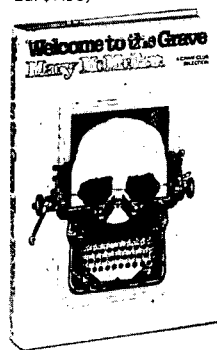
Reincarnation in Venice by Max Ehrlich. (Publ. Ed. \$9.95)



Police Chief by John Ball. (Publ. Ed. \$6.95)



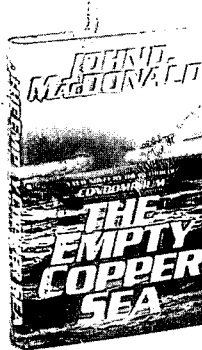
A Sharp Rise in Crime by John Creasey. (Publ. Ed. \$7.95)



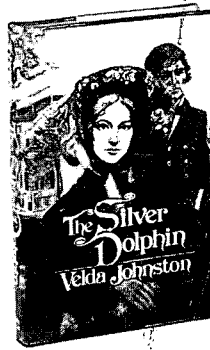
Welcome to the Grave by Mary McMullen. (Publ. Ed. \$7.95)



The Saint in Trouble by Leslie Charteris. (Publ. Ed. \$7.95)



The Empty Copper Sea by John D. MacDonald. (Publ. Ed. \$8.95)



The Silver Dolphin by Velda Johnston. (Publ. Ed. \$7.95)

See Inside Cover for Details.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED